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BY WAYNE C. BOOTH



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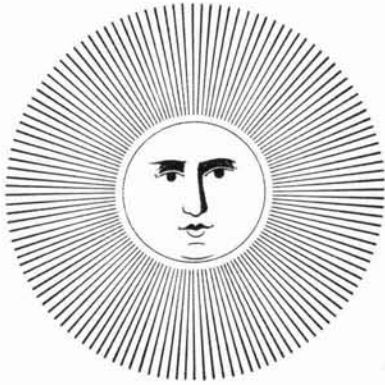
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### THE LIAHONA SAINT

**T**HANK YOU, SUNSTONE and Tom Alexander, for the memorial to our father, Richard Poll, and for printing his final paper, "A Liahona Latter-day Saint" (SUNSTONE, Sept. 1994). As children, we were primarily impressed by what we superficially regarded as the glamour of Dad's causes. As adults, we came to appreciate the pivotal influence he had on many by living a life dedicated to his church, while also asserting that dedication may have many faces. After his and Mother's passing, we have been comforted by the public and private testimonies of the positive effect they had on many.

Dad thrived on Church and gospel-related discussions and found in SUNSTONE, its symposiums, and publications a source of intellectual excitement, spiritual strength, and some of his closest personal ties, based on kinship in the same eternal quest. SUNSTONE fills a need in the lives of many, and we hope to see it continue to thrive as a facilitator for the expression of the diverse voices of the LDS community.

MARILYN BELL

NANETTE ALLEN

JENNIFER CRAWFORD

be not because we have the only true and living metaphors with which God is well pleased, but because we are the best at continually improving our metaphors through casting off the old and making better ones—our God-like act of creating heaven here.

However, I am not sure that is the case about Mormonism today. Yes, Joseph Smith did do that, albeit chaotically (is there any other way?), but are we continually making new and better metaphors today, at least consciously? It may be that the gradual evolution of Church practices as it grows and becomes world-wide is that act of creation, but it seems more an act of accommodation.

Hence, I am now less sure of Mormonism, but I am even more less sure about all other religions. But I don't have the confidence to go religion alone—sans a church—especially since Abbott points out (as does Elbert Peck) that we collectively, socially, construct our metaphors through our shared language.

Perhaps the social processes of myth-making are longer or more complex than I can observe during my life. If so, that fact is little comfort for one who has to work out her salvation now, here. I feel adrift. Thanks!

MELANIE JONES

Phoenix, AZ

### HOME FRIENDING

**E**LBERT PECK's right: We've cut church so much that in what remains we need to make sure hearts touch ("It's the Community, Folks!" SUNSTONE, Dec. 1995). We need to stop talking at each other and start talking with each other by sharing experiences and thoughts in open discussions—especially in home teaching. When home teachers read the First Presidency message and then leave, we have oversimplified the program. Better are home teachers who share their lives and invite me to share mine. Hearts touch, we explore the gospel in an intimate way, and I am connected to them later at church or in the grocery store. I don't need another lesson, but I can always use another friend.

TOM BROCK

San Francisco

### CHARITY FOR ALL

**T**HANKS FOR THE touching tribute, "Ezra Taft Benson: A Grandson's Remembrance" by Steve Benson (SUNSTONE, Dec. 1995). I still don't agree with President Benson, but now I see him as a human being who cares and tries, however imperfectly, to be a person of God. I now have charity for him and can forgive him his weaknesses.

Thanks, too, for helping me feel better about his "traitor" grandson. I don't agree with his journey, but I better understand it and see how his judgments and pronouncements of integrity come from his family upbringing: he's a true Benson, even if a black sheep. I feel charity toward him, too.

Because of my change of heart, I feel more charity toward myself, too, in my failing attempts to live right. And I feel God's love and charity toward us all. Flannery O'Connor may be right in "Revelation" that God will eventually burn away all the imperfections that we use to classify and judge each other.

I even feel kinder toward SUNSTONE and all its stupid editorial decisions. It does perhaps just as much good and harm as did President Benson in his zealous life, and at

### POSTMODERN DRIFT

**S**COTT ABBOTT'S "Will We Find Zion or Make It?" (SUNSTONE, Dec. 1995) troubles my faith. If everything is of human creation, including all our metaphors of religion, then the only reason to stay a Mormon would



this moment I am not sure I would want a Mormonism that excluded either participant.

JOSEPH STEPHANO  
Sydney, Australia

MORMON ANTI-SEMITISM

I SHARE Jacob Neusner's admiration for Steven Epperson's excellent book on Mormons and Jews ("Toward a Common Goal," SUNSTONE, Dec. 1994). Epperson makes a good case that the early LDS theological view was philo-Judaic and non-conversionist—regarding Jews as fellow members of the House of Israel, destined to fulfill the biblical promise of a return to the Land of Israel.

He also recognizes the "two divergent traditions" in Mormon leaders' views of Jews and Judaism, one irenically positive, the other inimically negative. He explains that the negative tradition came from European converts with a heritage of anti-Semitism. This interesting speculation is hardly cogent, since he demonstrates the intense theological hostility toward Jews in the American culture from which Mormonism emerged.

But the worst LDS expressions against

Jews are attributable not to converts but to the Book of Mormon. In 1 and 2 Nephi, the Jews are held culpable for the passion and crucifixion of Jesus. For not believing in his Messiahship, they are to be punished by dispersal and sufferings—a familiar Christian line. Moreover, in a prophetic text supposedly written in the sixth century B.C.E., it is predicted that Christ will "come among the Jews, among those who are the more wicked part of the world; and they shall crucify him . . . and there is none other nation on earth that would crucify their God." (2 Ne. 10:3.) Would Epperson grant that this is a vilification of the Jews, justifying anti-Jewish feeling, if not action—what historian Jules Isaac called "the teaching of contempt?"

As for the non-conversionist stance and the proto-Zionism he attributes early LDS leaders, we find that the Jews will return to Jerusalem only when they acknowledge Jesus as the Christ. (2 Ne. 10:7-8.) Elsewhere, the House of Israel is limited to those Jews and non-Jews who accept Jesus as Messiah and son of God. What Epperson gets from early leaders such as Joseph Smith and Orson Hyde is taken away by the Book of Mormon.

Working within the frame of the claimed sixth-century B.C.E. story of the persecution of Lehi and his family by Jerusalem Jews, Epperson finds the book's bitterness quite natural. This seems a long way around to an attitude and justification that goes back to the beginnings of the Christian church. What we are getting in the Book of Mormon may be New Testament accounts given a fabulous sixth-century B.C.E. context. A more probable explanation of anti-Semitism among some Mormons is that they are Americans, and this spiritual plague is as American as apple pie.

Shouldn't there have been striking experiences of "cognitive dissonance" among Saints faced with such contradictory messages from their leaders and the Book of Mormon?

SEYMOUR CAIN  
San Diego, CA

SCHINDLERGATE

THE DECISION BY Brigham Young University officials to scuttle an on-campus screening of Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* unless the filmmaker would snip out "the starkness, the nudity, the violence" is almost





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impossible to comprehend ("Schindler's Taken off BYU's List," SUNSTONE, Apr. 1995). Apparently, they had a Saturday morning of the Holocaust in mind. Fortunately, and not surprisingly, Spielberg said, "Hell no!"

It is no small irony that BYU, affiliated with the historically persecuted LDS church, would have demanded such injudicious edits of the most morally instructive film of our time. How is *Schindler's List*, with its monumental ethical lessons, suitable for Mormon youth only after emasculation, while the film *Beethoven's 2nd* is okay?

That any university, which should open the universe to its students, would react so close-mindedly is wrong. That a religious university, ostensibly founded on abiding moral principles, would do so is unconscionable. Even Pat Robertson's ultraconservative "The 700 Club," which refuses to endorse R-rated films, urged its adherents to see it.

Mormon bashing has been in the news lately, thanks to Ted Kennedy's swipes at Mitt Romney. It is often wrong to make sweeping generalizations about any group, and Mormon bashing is as insidious as any other form of bigotry. But there's a reason why a Gallup poll in the late 1980s found that Mormonism had the least favorable image of any religion in the country, with only a 6 percent favorable rating. Decisions like the one regarding *Schindler's List* offer vivid explanation.

Several Mormon friends are horribly embarrassed over the *Schindler* fiasco, and a few urged me to write this letter. They're afraid to. Those who criticize their Church face excommunication, the religious equivalent of a Holocaust-style execution.

No matter how much ranting there is from outsiders, the LDS church will evolve at its own pace. I encourage Church leaders to take a long, hard look at their actions regarding Schindlergate and indulge in a little quiet reflection. Out of the chaos of life, we all crave guidance, direction, and purpose. Religions are in the business of teaching people how to live. Culture, too, can provide a vital adjunct, *Schindler's List* being a prime example. It is nothing short of sacrilege to order tomorrow's leaders to turn away from it.

To BYU's leadership: Waive your abstinence from caffeine this once and consider an intravenous coffee drip. It's time to wake up.

MICHAEL LEVINE  
Los Angeles

### THE THREE

NOWHERE IN the news story "Elder Packer Names Gays/Lesbians, Feminists, and 'So-called' Scholars Three Main Dangers"

(SUNSTONE, Nov. 1993) is Elder Packer quoted as saying that gays/lesbians, feminists, and intellectuals are the three main dangers to the Church (or even that they explicitly are main dangers). What exactly did he say? I don't see those groups as main dangers to the Church, nor are homophobia, misogyny, and anti-intellectualism. I nominate ethnocentrism, poverty, and sexism.

MARK ASHURST-MCGEE  
Provo, UT

Editors' reply:

Elder Packer said: "There are three areas where members of the Church, influenced by social and political unrest, are being caught up and led away. . . . The dangers I speak of come from the gay-lesbian movement, the feminist movement, and the ever-present challenge from the so-called scholars or intellectuals."

Elder Packer said he named the three because "they have made major invasions into the membership of the Church" and "local leaders must deal with all three of them with ever-increasing frequency."



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become inadequate. Prior learns that God has abandoned those institutions because they are fixated on the status quo. He rejects the establishment because it has forsaken truth; it has forsaken life.

Life is change, movement, and migration. That is what this play means to tell us. God is interested only in life forms that are evolving. In the Council Room of Heaven scene, Prior says, "Take back your book. Anti-Migration, that's so feeble, I can't believe you couldn't do better than that. . . ." Prior stands for the spirit of prophetic courage. "The Great Trek" diorama scene of the play, set in an LDS visitors' center, is exquisitely comic, but beneath the humor is something profound and inspiring. It is here that Prior is exposed to the idea of migration in response to affliction. It is the idea he takes to heaven.

The most interesting thing about the play, and which will bother LDS audiences, is its fantastic synthesis of sacred and profane elements, its ambivalent fusion of praise and condemnation. In it, Mormonism can be both admirable and deplorable at the same time. In a *Salt Lake Tribune* interview, Kushner reveals his ambivalence toward Mormons when he talks about a young Latter-day Saint he taught: "She was a great kid—incredibly energetic, straightforward, sincere, intelligent—characteristics I associate with Mormons. Her family, however, held conservative views that were deeply distasteful to me. They were decent people who nevertheless oppose what I consider to be a generally progressive agenda."

In an interview for the gay community, Kushner said he admired how Joseph Smith single-handedly created an American religious tradition complete with ancient roots. "What is more gay," he said in effect, "than rewriting your past when reality doesn't suit you?" Kushner is saying that Mormonism could teach the gay community a valuable lesson on the importance of creating myth and the way faith shapes people's destiny.


In *Angels*, even the unsavory Roy Cohn, a traitor to Jews and homosexuals, has something to teach—the art of wheeling and deal-

ing with those you hate in order to get things done. In his perverted way, Cohn stands for a rejection of deadly immobility; that is why he is marginally redeemed—not because, as Evenden says, he is a victim of AIDS.

This is how Kushner's play embraces diversity. Its message, to the gay community in particular, is that we must learn to use strategies from diverse sources, even our worst enemies; we must try whatever works and learn from it. That is evolution, adaptation, migration; the essential nature of life, and our only guarantee of survival.

Evenden notes how in *Angels* the domestic crisis of the gay couple Louis and Prior contrasts with the LDS couple Joe and Harper. Both Louis and Joe leave their spouses, but Louis has committed a sin, whereas homosexual Joe has merely taken an inevitable step in his quest for wholeness. Evenden takes this as evidence of the play's skewed sense of right. It is proof that for Kushner, "loyalty to afflicted gay men is the one fixed moral criterion." Joe is justified in his abandonment of his "helpless and irrational wife, apparently because she is a suffering straight woman," Evenden alleges. But Evenden leaves out the crucial difference. Harper's emotional pain is caused largely by her husband's heterosexual masquerade. Surely, the long-term moral solution to their crisis is not more of what has made them both sick.

Evenden observes that in the epilogue, no Mormons who are still loyal to the values of the Church have been included in the community of friends sharing Prior's dispensation: "Kushner is not reconciliatory [at the fundamental level] with those he considers the enemies of his people." Is that so unfair? How many faithful Latter-day Saints can Evenden name who can cry, in solidarity with Prior, "We will be citizens. The time has come," and remain completely loyal to their Church, which sponsors "reparative therapy" for homosexuals, works to uphold Colorado's anti-gay Amendment 2, and urges the defeat of a Hawaii initiative that would permit same-sex marriage? No wonder Hannah must leave the political values of her faith to

 Pontius' Puddle





partake in Kushner's new millennium.

There are liberal Mormons. Brother Evenden is one, but even he admits that his loyalties are riven by the irreconcilability of gay liberation and the heterosexually centered values of the Church. His solution, or more accurately, the starting place is this: Mormons must respect the spontaneous, unchosen nature of same-sex orientation just as gays and lesbians must understand that for many Mormons, "religion operates at the same level of unbidden discovery." By equating sexual orientation with "spiritual orientation" Evenden reveals that he still does not grasp the nature of sexual predisposition.

As an LDS gay man, born into the faith, active in the gay community and the Church, I affirm that there is more poetry than truth in his comparison. It is not that sexuality is the only source of identity, but sexuality is as basic to a person's identity as race. Religious preference is a philosophic affinity nurtured by a person's will to believe. There is a vast difference between an immutable characteristic and a belief, even a foreordained one. It is not that all religiously prompted denial of sexual desire is doomed to failure; it is that most people suffer a fundamental diminishment of spiritual identity when they are less than authentic in their sexual lives.

It is hard for even a sympathetic heterosexual to appreciate the depth in which this phenomenon operates. He or she has been swimming with the current since birth. It is easy to overestimate your strength as a swimmer and underestimate the force of the flow until you've gone against it. Heterosexual Mormons frequently equate the *management* of their own impulses with the total *suppression* of same-sexual behavior. Until straight Latter-day Saints appreciate the disproportionate share of burden the Church binds upon homosexuals, the dialogue even Evenden proposes can accomplish little.

DAVID H. CALLAHAN  
Los Angeles

Michael Evenden responds:

I agree that Kushner's fusion of the sacred and profane is provocatively pleasurable and disturbing, a key trait of a remarkable work. My frustration is largely with Kushner's insistence on sorting these complexities out in order to give his play a morally simple, tendentious ending, and also with those critics who (I believe) miss his point—that in the end, codified religion is judged as static and dead, and that spirituality resides instead in one who chooses to "curse God [or at least—profane humor again—to sue him] and live." For me, a part of this forcible rush to the ending is Kushner's last-minute, and too-

simple, determination that Harper's instability is a mere result of her inauthentic marriage to Joe, a convenient shortcut to her final, reassuring exit from the play.

While there is much for us to think about in Kushner's depiction of Mormons, including how far we've traveled from our radically innovative beginnings, we cannot celebrate Kushner's use of Mormon symbols without acknowledging that in the end he rejects them, both in the play and in a review in *American Theater* where he briskly dismisses Mormon theology, symbols, and ritual as "so dumb." I am not surprised that Kushner depicts Mormonism as a failure, and ultimately an enemy to a healthy, progressive community; I am surprised that few acknowledge that that is his point.

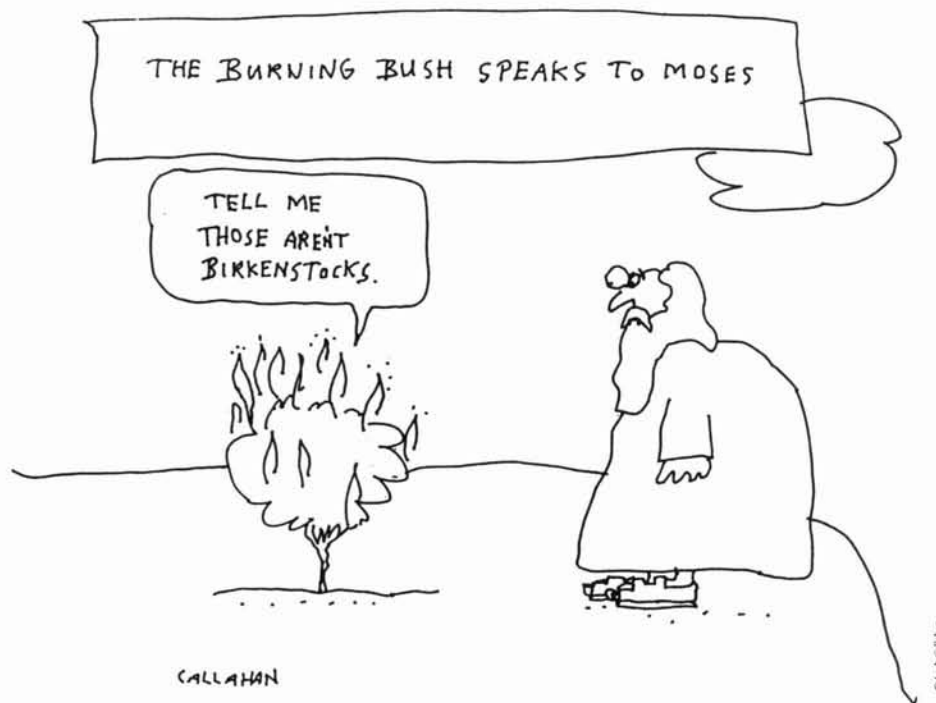
I also thank Brother Callahan for his words on the larger issues Kushner raises, including the necessity for adaptation, change, growth (including learning from our enemies), and, obviously, the challenges of understanding spiritual and sexual difference. In proposing "spiritual orientation" as a companion term to "sexual orientation," I was only attempting to offer neutral language for a respectful and evenhanded dialogue between traditional Mormonism and gay liberation—a hypothetical interchange that I concede may be nothing more than a fantasy. Dialogue, after all, requires a willingness by all concerned to lay down defenses, to learn, and to acknowledge previously unrecognized truth. But just as Mormons don't want to believe that gays and lesbians can still have vital spiritual lives, Callahan apparently

doesn't want to concede that any gay Mormons might find fulfillment while being "less than authentic in their sexual lives." Perhaps one side is absolutely right (and I am committed to a general belief in prophetic authority, which has certainly taken sides); yet I am—and here, if anywhere, lies my liberalism—congenitally uneasy with sweeping pronouncements about other people's inner lives, and both sides in this debate come armed with such pronouncements and a deep determination to win the argument.

One way out of stalemate might be for more people who have negotiated this unmarked terrain to find a broad forum in which to share more fully—and without clichés—their personal experience, whatever the individual conclusion. This, at least, would build on the Mormon tradition of members sharing personal experience and reflection. But unless we are willing to really listen to such unanticipated experiences, we will not only learn nothing, we will fail to learn whether we had anything to learn.

## I'M A SHELL

VIEWING *Angels in America* was an incredible and powerful experience. For me, the most significant segment begins with Harper's hallucination that she shares with Prior when he "reveals" to her that her husband's a homo." In this scene, which is split, Harper asks Joe whether he is gay, while at the other end of the stage, Prior and Louis discuss the proper basis of judgment and Irish immigrants being tossed into the sea:



JOE: I think we ought to pray. Ask God for help. Ask him together . . .

HARPER: God won't talk to me. I have to make up people to talk to me.

JOE: You have to keep asking.

HARPER: I forgot the question. Oh yeah. God, is my husband a . . .

JOE (*Scary*): Stop it. Stop it. I'm warning you. Does it make any difference? That I might be one thing deep within, no matter how wrong or ugly that thing is, so long as I have fought, with everything I have, to kill it. What do you want from me? . . . For God's sake, there's nothing left, I'm a shell. There's nothing left to kill. As long as my behavior is what I know it has to be. Decent. Correct. That alone in the eyes of God.

And later in the scene:

PRIOR: One of my ancestors was a ship's captain who made money bringing whale oil to Europe and returning with immigrants—Irish mostly, packed in tight, so many dollars per head. The last ship he captained foundered off the coast of Nova Scotia in a winter tempest and sank to the bottom. He went down with the ship—la Grande Geste—but his crew took seventy women and kids in . . . this big, open rowboat, and when . . . and they thought the boat was overcrowded, the crew started lifting people up and hurling them into the sea. Until they got the ballast right. . . . [W]hen the boat rode low in the water they'd grab the nearest passenger and throw them into the sea. The boat was leaky, see; seventy people; they ar-

rived in Halifax with nine people on board . . . I think about that story a lot now. People in a boat, waiting, terrified, while implacable, unsmiling men, irresistibly strong, seize . . . maybe the person next to you, maybe you, and with no warning at all, with time only for a quick intake of air you are pitched into freezing, turbulent water and salt and darkness to drown.

When I saw the play, this sequence moved me powerfully. Homosexuality is not a "demon" with which I deal. However, I have wrestled, and continue to wrestle, with my own demons. Each of us has our own internal struggles, some of which consist of efforts to be authentic to ourselves while at the same time trying to "face the right way," as Elder Packer says. For me, gazing inward and exploring my own feelings, intuitions, beliefs, and urges—in a blatantly honest and excruciatingly painful and intensely focused manner—is part of my being. However, as I responded to these inner promptings, they led me beyond the comfortable bounds set by Correlation. I asked myself questions whose answers indicated that the theological foundations upon which I had constructed my life were not "black and white," as I had been taught in childhood and had instructed others in adulthood.

But I simply could not allow myself to disagree with the cultural and doctrinal views expressed by my Church leaders. The result, a Procrustean cutting off of certain parts of my intellectual and spiritual self, was both damning and painful. If we ignore and

repress parts of our souls, we are psychologically walking up and down our own longboat, and when threatened by a thought or feeling, we toss it into the sea. We eventually get to the point where we cry, "For God's sake, there's nothing left, I'm a shell. There's nothing left to kill. As long as my behavior is what I know it has to be. Decent. Correct. That alone in the eyes of God."

KEN ANDERSON  
Houston, TX

## EASTER MOURNING

THE LOSS OF ceremony and seasonal ritual when I joined the LDS church three years ago was profound: no Advent, no Christmas season, no Lent, and no Easter.

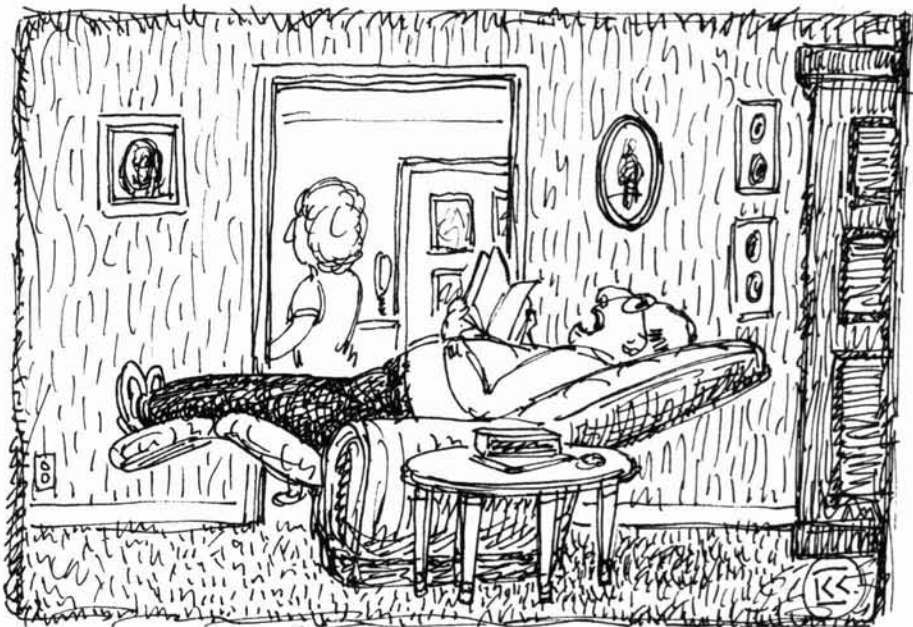
I feel, as Chris Sexton seems to, that these celebrations linked to the equinoxes were "utterly proper and indeed powerful" ("Easter Has Been Canceled This Year," *SUNSTONE* Sept. 1994). All these special church seasons revolve around the symbolism of light and dark, which touch a part of me no televised conference can ever reach.

While some traditions can translate from the congregation to the home, that change robs the season of the joy and solidarity of celebrating in community. I attend Protestant churches in my area for Advent, Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, or Good Friday just to recapture the sharing of drama and faith with other believers in Christ.

The loss of Easter is the hardest. Often general conference incorporates no recounting of the drama of the resurrection, no homage to new life. And, most astounding, there is no sacrament. If we can sing hymns during the broadcast or taped replay, if we can bow our heads in long-distance prayer, can't we partake of the sacrament in memory of Christ on the day commemorating his resurrection?

I also notice a knowledge gap in the Christ's life among Mormons. We study gospel doctrines, read scripture stories, and listen to talks and testimonies—all good—but few members I know have the foundational familiarity with the Savior's that comes from year-after-year repetition of his birth, ministry, death, and triumph over sin and death.

When I see Christmas lights in the dark of winter, my thoughts turn to the return of our Light in the world's time of tribulation. When I sit in a bare and darkened sanctuary on Good Friday, I feel the devastation of the loss of his light. When I see the Easter lilies surrounding an altar that had been stripped bare the Friday before, I see the new life that left the tomb empty, and I rejoice in the life everlasting.



"If anyone from the ward calls, tell 'em I'm at the temple."

Watching television with others is not community worship. TV isolates rather than unites viewers. It destroys family interaction, and I cringe when it destroys my Church family. Rather than passing the bread and the water in the light to one another, when one

sits in the Tabernacle, or on folding chairs in a darkened meetinghouse watching the glow of the set, or on a living room sofa, it may be reverent, but it is not worshipful.

HEIDI N. BRUGGER  
Freedom, ME

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## OF GOOD REPORT

### "We Have Been Part of a Civil and Ecclesial Tradition That Has Offended against Women."

*At the 34th General Congregation in its 461-year history, the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) released, on 22 March 1995, the remarkable two-page document, "Jesuits and the Situation of Women in Church and Civil Society" (excerpted below), which apologized for its past complicity in offenses against women and committed the religious order to work to remedy the situation.*

We wish to consider . . . the "unjust treatment and exploitation of women" . . . This is principally because, assisted by the general rise on consciousness concerning this issue, we are more aware than previously that it is indeed a central concern of any contemporary mission which seeks to integrate faith and justice. . . .

**The Situation.** The dominance of men in their relationship with women has found expression in many ways. It has included discrimination against women in educational opportunities, the disproportionate burden they are called upon to bear in family life, paying them a lesser wage for the same work, limiting their access to the positions of influence when admitted to public life and, sadly, and only too frequently, outright violence against . . . women. . . .

This situation, however, has begun to change, chiefly because of the critical awakening and courageous protest of women themselves. . . . Nonetheless, we still have with us the legacy of systematic discrimination against women. . . .

**The Church Addresses the Situation.** . . . The original plan of God was for a loving relationship of respect, mutuality and equality between men and women, and we are called to fulfill this plan. The tone of this [Catholic] ecclesial reflection on Scripture [Gen. 1:27] makes it clear that there is an urgency in the challenge to translate theory into practice not only outside, but also within, the church itself.

**Role and Responsibility of Jesuits.** The society of Jesus accepts this challenge and our responsibility for doing what we can as men and as a male religious order. We do not pretend or claim to speak for women. However, we do speak out of what we have learned from women about ourselves and our relationship with them.

. . . We respond, too, out of the acknowledgment of our own limited but significant influence a Jesuits and as male religious within the church. We are conscious of the damage to the people of God brought about by the alienation of women in some cultures who no longer feel at home in the Church and who are not able with integrity to transmit Catholic values to their families, friends and colleagues.

**Conversion.** In response, we Jesuits first ask God for grace of conversion. We have been part of a civil and ecclesial tradition that has offended against women. And, like many men, we have a tendency to convince ourselves that there is no problem. However unwittingly, we have often been complicit in a form of clericalism which has reinforced male domination with an ostensibly divine

sanction. By making this declaration we wish to react personally and collectively, and do what we can to change this regrettable situation.

**Appreciation.** We know that the nurturing of our own faith and much of our own ministry would be greatly diminished without the dedication, generosity and joy that women bring to the schools, parishes and other fields in which we labor together. . . . Many women have helped to reshape our theological tradition in a way that has liberated both men and women. We wish to express our appreciation for this profound contribution of women. . . .

**Ways Forward.** . . . We do not presume that there is any one model of male-female relationship to be recommended, much less imposed, throughout the world or even within a given culture. . . . We must be careful not to interfere in a way that alienates the culture, but rather we must endeavor to facilitate a more organic process of change. . . .

In the first instance, we invite all Jesuits to listen carefully and courageously to the experience of women. . . . There is no substitute for such listening. More than anything else it will bring about change. Without listening, action in this area, no matter how well-intentioned, is likely to bypass the real concerns of women and to confirm male condescension and reinforce male dominance. . . .

Second, we invite all Jesuits, as individuals and through their institutions, to align themselves in solidarity with women. The practical ways of doing this will vary from place to place and from culture to culture, but many examples come readily to mind:

- Explicit teaching of the essential equality of women and men...
- Support for liberation movements for women which oppose their exploitation and encourage their entry into political and social life.
- Specific attention to the phenomenon of violence. . . .
- Genuine involvement of women in consultation and decision making in our Jesuit ministries.
- Respectful collaboration with our female colleagues. . . .
- Use of appropriately inclusive language. . . .
- Promotion of the education of women and . . . the elimination of all forms of illegitimate discrimination between boys and girls....

**Conclusion.** . . . We know that a reflective and sustained commitment to bring about this respectful reconciliation can flow only from our God of love and justice, who reconciles all and promises a world in which "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).



## FROM THE EDITOR

## WHAT'S A UNIVERSITY FOR?



By *Elbert Eugene Peck*

AS A STUDENT at Brigham Young University, I took its mission to combine revealed and rational truths with a zealotry perhaps only appropriate to idealistic undergraduates. I was frustrated and piously indignant when the Psych. 101 lab teaching assistant was more interested in ensuring that we understood B. F. Skinner's deterministic ideas than he was in holding them up to scrutiny against the restored gospel's teachings on agency. Today, I value parallel approaches to knowing and think such judgments should come after much work and contemplation. The T.A. wanted me to master fundamentals and acquire critical skills before rushing to theological judgments. Imagine.

With few exceptions, I left BYU feeling that the faculty had a lot more to give than I was willing to learn. Of course, I learned more with better teachers, but the fault lay not with the campus's stars but with myself. Fifteen years later, I still feel that way, except about my Religious Education classes.

Five years after college, I and other LDS friends formed an Old Testament study group to complement the Church's gospel doctrine course. As a result of being introduced to the incredibly rich world of biblical scholarship, I came to feel that my alma mater had cheated me. It had given me college credit for what were essentially expanded Sunday School classes. While exposure to different disciplinary approaches had been an essential component of psychology and other introductory classes, there had been no attempt to introduce me to the different approaches to Bible studies. Nor had there really been any attempt or desire to get me to think critically about my religious life. The purpose had been to get me to understand and believe the world view of the Restoration. I champion that purpose and think one's college years are a crucial time for that to happen; it just shouldn't have had the

vener of a university education without the critical methodology. (There are religion professors who do endeavor to cultivate religious critical thinking, but that's not a goal of the program.)

Recently, I've been pondering the tensions between the competitive, pluralistic assumptions of American university education and the authoritative, prophetic demands of our religion. Those two modes of knowing often come into harsh and painful conflict at BYU. Good, faithful professors have been disciplined for applying rational approaches to areas traditionally left to Church leaders. BYU has academic freedom in almost everything but religion, yet it wants the prestige of the academy in its religious scholarship, too.

A couple of years ago, BYU President Rex E. Lee told the faculty that the university had created for religious studies, BYU has more academic freedom than anywhere else. He illustrated the point with four hypothetical examples of faculty research:<sup>1</sup>

1. A constitutional law professor who wants to incorporate into both her teaching and scholarship her belief, rooted in modern scripture, that the U.S. Constitution "did not come into existence by pure chance—that God played a deliberate role in its establishment." She wants to explore supporting objective indicia, scriptural and non-scriptural, and the theoretical and practical consequences.
2. A human anatomy professor who wants to build both her teaching and scholarship on her conviction that "the human body is a divine creation, and that many of its functions and characteristics can be better understood and appreciated once one accepts that premise."
3. A psychology professor whose "thesis is that human behavior cannot be fully understood unless the spiritual component is taken into account."
4. An LDS professor so convinced that "the

Book of Mormon is one of the most remarkable pieces of literature in the 19th century, but that it is nothing more than remarkable literature," that he wants to teach it to his students and build his scholarship around it.

President Lee noted that the first three individuals have greater freedom to pursue the "intersections and interrelationships" of faith and their discipline at BYU than at public universities and at most private ones. The fourth professor would be asked to leave BYU but could pursue his studies "virtually anywhere" else except at an LDS institution, he said. BYU, however, is the only place where the first three could pursue their academic interests. Lee also championed the fact that BYU gives the first three professors "the opportunity for candid discussion among ourselves."

No university can be all things; I accept BYU's restrictions on scholarship that opposes Church doctrine. Nevertheless, the history of religiously motivated research, even in Mormonism, is so quirky that the first three individuals need the constant checking a critical scholarly community provides. And it seems to me that that essential collegial dialogue is in danger of becoming seriously diminished at BYU through the silencing of diverging religious views. If a faculty member who strongly challenges the scholarship of any of the first three hypotheticals feels reluctant to disagree and argue over points because her testimony will be suspect, then the refining nature of the university is threatened. If that philosophy is carried to its extreme, BYU becomes not a university but a center or an institute dedicated to one-sided explorations. Such places have their function—conservative think tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute, for example—but they must be balanced in the larger idea marketplace by other groups and individuals. A fundamental purpose of a university, in contrast to an institute or center, is to embrace critical diversity within its walls—otherwise we get wishy-washy religious scholarship that is of little long-term use and students who are ideologues without the refining of critical thinking.

Instead of labeling and excluding sincere but diverging students and scholars, there must be better ways to inculcate faith, commune on essentials, and allow for the rigorous exchange of diverse opinions and approaches in our religious thinking. That is perhaps not entirely possible at the moment, but our reach must exceed our grasp, or what's a university for?

1. Rex E. Lee, Annual University Conference, Brigham Young University, 25 August 1993, 13–15.



## TURNING THE TIME OVER TO...

Heather Sundahl

## RELIEF SOCIETY BABY



CHRISTOPHER THORNACK

*My Mom calls me her Relief Society baby, and although it is a term of endearment, for years it triggered only resentment and sarcasm.*

*"I'm not your baby," I'd think. "Relief Society is."*

**M**Y MOM calls me her Relief Society baby. She served in the stake or ward Relief Society presidency on and off from the time I was born until, well, last December. Although "Relief Society baby" was a term of endearment, for years it triggered only resentment and sarcasm. "I'm not your baby," I'd think. "Relief Society is." And so I grew up hating what I saw as this other, favorite child. I became the jealous sibling, too needy not to compete, too small to win. Yet I rarely resented my three older siblings. In fact, we were all a united front against this monster child that sucked up my

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mom. Only recently am I finally learning to put away my sibling rivalry, accept this other child, and embrace sisterhood.

Most of my early memories involve Relief Society. I still feel the anxiety and shame of my first full-blown lie. I was pestering my mother to read to me, but every time she sat down with the book, the phone rang. It was "business": a meeting to be scheduled, a casserole to be delivered, a lesson to coordinate, a service project to plan, a counselor to be released. . . . The phone (Relief Society's ultimate weapon) was the enemy—more frequent than meetings, longer than visiting teaching. For what seemed like the hundredth time, my mother sat down and opened up the book. But before the twelve dancing princesses could even get their shoes on, the phone rang again. I hopped off her

lap and picked it up. "Hello?" I said, my voice tiny with fear. "Is your mommy home?" It was the stake president. I paused only long enough to shift away from my mother's "I-can-see-right-through-you" blue eyes. "No. She isn't." Click. "It was for Angela," I said smoothly, the lie becoming my friend. And the twelve princesses danced until dawn in a frenzy only deceit can inspire.

In order to spend more time with Mom, I refused to go to preschool. Tiring of my tears, she gave in. My favorite part of those days was visiting teaching. Each woman was a godmother to me, kind and tender, granting unlimited cookie rights and swapping stories like recipes. Those magical visits first showed me the beauty of female friendship—how praying, encouraging, and kvetching is an unparalleled joy.

Another reason I enjoyed accompanying Mom was that she seemed so powerful and important when she did her job. There was a notable difference between Mom as housewife and Mom as Sister Bickmore, the stake Relief Society president. Like Clark Kent emerging from the phone booth as Superman, Mom would hop into our Country Squire and become Supermormon, the most powerful woman in the stake. Mom was legendary, a modern Martha, forever behind the scenes, making sure all was well in the community. And she loved it. People respected her for her competence as well as her compassion, her brains as well as her brownies.

Unfortunately, womanhood was not so revered in my home. It was seen as a noble calling, in an abstract sense. But in real family life, the implicit assumption was that the sons were smarter than the daughters, that Dad's job was more "real" than Mom's homemaking, and that a "logical," emotionally removed (read "male") approach to life was superior to an intuitive or care-giving (read "female") approach. Perhaps my father is simply a product of a generation that emphasized providing over interacting. My brothers, however, see my dad in an entirely different light; while Angela and I struggle to conjure up memories of childhood with him included, Lee and Danny recall not just a provider, but a Scoutmaster, a tee-ball coach, and a friend.

If my home had had fewer gender-based boundaries, I might not have resented being female so much. So although my time with Mom revealed the potential power of womanhood, I began to believe, as I got older, that men were indeed superior—why else would Dad take the boys places and not the girls? It is ironic that just when I might have started

*"Did you ever stop to think that it was better to be raised as a Relief Society baby than to have a mother with no self-esteem?"*

seeing Relief Society as an ally, not an enemy, I instead saw femininity as a flaw and womanhood as a consolation prize in some twisted, pre-mortal gender game that I had lost.

As I entered BYU, my resentment for my mother (and in some ways all women) intensified. I learned the language of the academy, the language of power—the father tongue, which Ursula Le Guin says is “the language of thought that seeks objectivity,” and “distancing—making a gap, a space, between the subject or self and the object or other.”<sup>1</sup> Finally, I had learned to detach myself and look coolly upon the rest of the world. Maybe I was as good as my brothers. I practiced this new dialect on my father, and, to my delight and surprise, he listened. I reveled in my proficiency in the father tongue since “those who don’t know it or won’t speak it are silent, or silenced, or unheard.”<sup>2</sup> I would be silent no more. I openly scorned Relief Society with its lace tablecloths, floral dresses, tears, and touchy-feely attitude. Things like Relief Society made women seem silly and emotional. I stopped attending Relief Society altogether and occasionally sat in on a priesthood meeting. Not a chiffon

bow in sight. I thought I was in heaven.

Thus I started to become the woman Le Guin describes as estranged and alienated from the feminine:

She recoils from the idea of sisterhood and doesn’t believe women have friends . . . and anyhow, A Woman is afraid of women. She’s a male construct, and she’s afraid women will deconstruct her.<sup>3</sup>

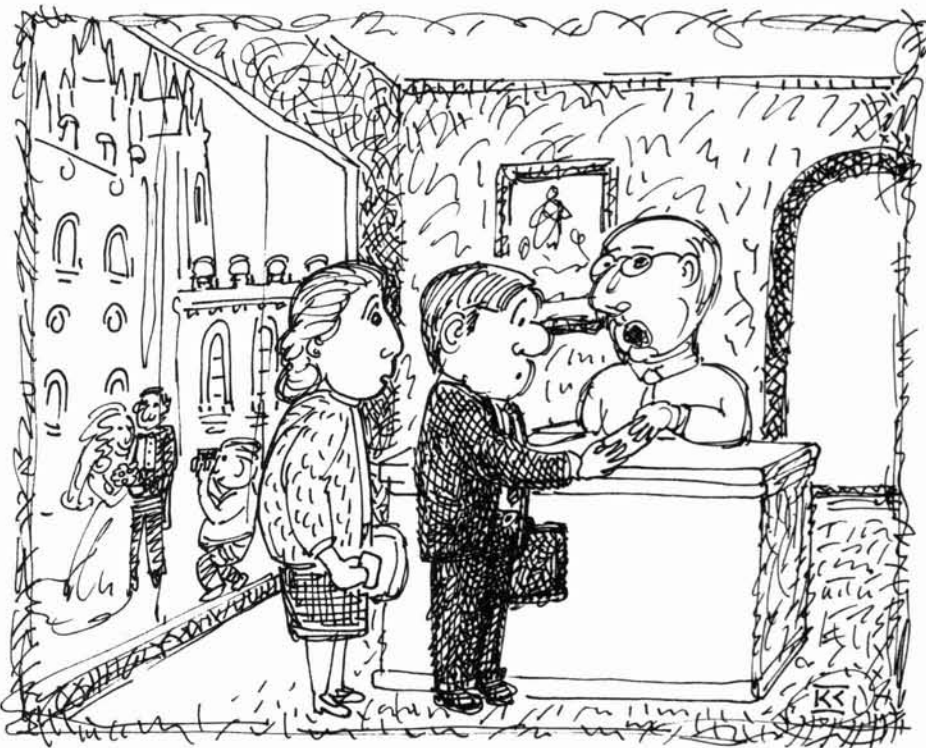
I did not reject women completely, just the ones I felt gave the rest of us a bad name. The summer after my freshman year, I read Ayn Rand, hung out with guys, and, when my mom coerced me (“How would it look if the stake Relief Society president’s daughter wasn’t in attendance?”), went to Relief Society and didn’t talk to a soul.

Returning to BYU, I studied gender theory and women’s literature with some of the finest souls I’ve ever encountered. At first I was resistant, thinking feminism was for women who couldn’t quite cut it in this man’s world. But I read and listened and for the first time spoke up about what being a woman meant to me. Feminism was not a philosophical weed, but a tree with many branches, most of which reach up toward the

light. I also realized that it was not only okay to be a woman, but that it was incredible. When I read Grace Paley, Maxine Hong Kingston, or Terry Tempest Williams, it was like a revelation: “Verily, verily, thus spoke Woman.” Here were voices that shared my world, my language. They fit. Not like a glove, but like a pair of faded jeans, snug enough to feel secure, baggy enough to accommodate my tush (another legacy from the women on my mother’s side), and roomy enough to grow into. By recognizing feminism as an empowering philosophy and not a crutch for weaklings, I took my first step toward sisterhood. Like those days of visiting teaching with my mom, I again felt the security and power of the female community.

Unfortunately, due to my youth (okay, immaturity), I included only others who felt as I felt and believed in my sorority. How could I relate to women who dropped out of school to get married? Or women who said, “My husband thinks . . .” when they answered a question in Sunday School? Or women who said, “Who cares?” to Heavenly Mother, sexism, or BYU’s Women’s Resource Center? So although I had discovered my own voice and embraced my own womanhood, I still had a hard time listening to the many voices of Relief Society. Wasn’t it little more than a catering service for wedding receptions and stake functions? To me, it symbolized servitude and self-delusion: Can you really heal anybody with a casserole?

Aside from conflicting views of womanhood, my mother and I had other barriers. I always felt that she substituted the external for the internal and sought politeness over intimacy. If I came to her crying, instead of empathy, I’d get a bowl of soup. If I was depressed, instead of a heart-to-heart, she’d clean my room. I have difficulty seeing past these acts, and as a result, I have never felt like my mother and I were friends. When my resentment over the years I spent as her Relief Society orphan overflowed (and it did regularly), I would attack her hypocrisy, citing many of my friends’ moms who worked “outside the home” who were around more than she was. What was the virtue of staying home if your Church calling required the better part of your time and energy? Yet inwardly I blamed myself. Somewhere inside I felt I’d failed as a daughter. Why else would she have privileged her calling above my needs?



*"May I also see a driver's license and a major credit card?"*

It wasn't until one late summer night right after I got married that I finally understood. I was in my old room, sitting on the bed, looking at some of my old books. *Amelia Bedelia*, *Horton Hatches an Egg*, *The Brut Family*—you know the kind. Mom came in and sat next to me.

"I used to love to read to you kids," she said, picking up a book of Norwegian fairy tales. "This was Danny's favorite." She sighed and adjusted her reading glasses, thumb at the bottom of the lens, index finger on her temple. The other fingers fanned out in a fluid motion. (There is something swan-like in her gestures and carriage. Dad calls it class. I call it grace.) "I read it to him so many times we both knew it by heart. But I can't remember what I read to you." Her eyes searched the stack as she stroked the fairy tales.

"I don't know, Mom. I don't remember you reading to me all that much," I said, trying to be honest but not accusatory. At twenty-two, I was getting tired of accusations. She looked at me and smiled. "That's right. You were my Relief Society baby. I never really got a chance to read to you like I did with the others." Something in her voice seemed to invite sincere dialogue, so I cautiously approached her about my childhood. I shared my hurt over feeling second best. I told her about the lie to the stake president and my anger at Dad's emotional abandonment. I let it all out. But not to hurt her. It was as if we had momentarily been joined emotionally and could share freely without defense or judgment. She listened with her soul, and I spoke with my heart. She paused when I finished, and then she shared her heart with me. "Do you know what it's like," she said, "to raise small children, keep your husband happy, and run a household efficiently? It's a lot of work, which I don't mind. Growing up, I looked forward to it. I'd watch Mom and Dad in the kitchen canning peaches together and thought that was what marriage was. Dad always did chores. He didn't just 'help out.' He assumed responsibility and enjoyed being with Mother. But their relationship was unusual."

She paused and smoothed the pillowcases. "No one acknowledges housework. No one really cares if your children are clean or if you have a dust-free coffee table. Not that those things aren't important, but there is no recognition. But to successfully organize and cater a luncheon for 300? That's different. You see, Hedy, in the Relief Society my importance was acknowledged. My skills were valued and praised. It gave me confidence and enabled me to grow in infinite ways."

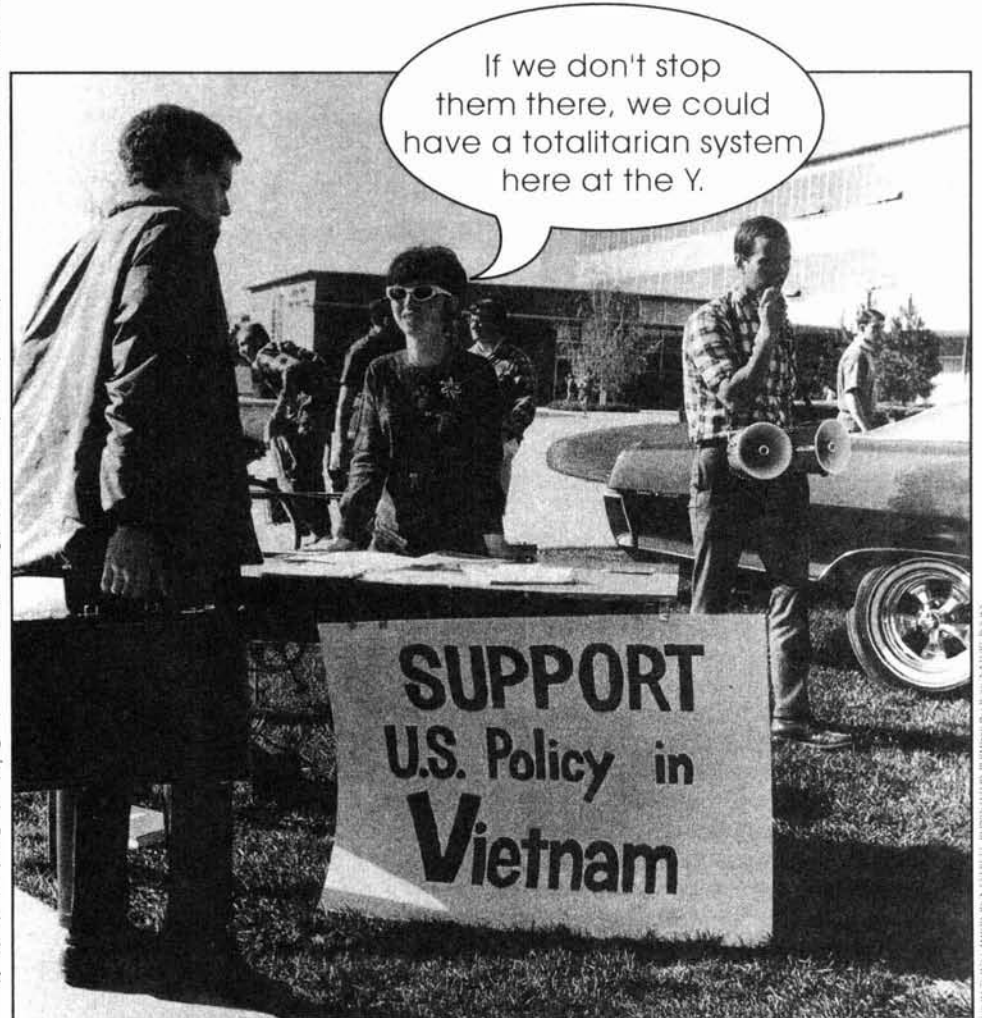
"But Mom," I said, "was all of that more important than me?" She shook her head slowly and without shame. "No. But did you ever stop to think that it was better to be raised as a Relief Society baby than to have a mother with no self-esteem?" Her words were fire, burning away my ignorance and self-pity. I began to understand. I had not been abandoned. Her confidence and her power were her gifts to me. And, in a way, they are more precious because we had both paid for them together. That night changed me. I had experienced an intimacy with my mother that—however rare—binds me to her. We had heard each other. It also awakened in me a new perspective on my childhood, my mother, and the power of Relief Society.

**S**INCE then, my understanding and appreciation of Relief Society has continued to grow. Last year my husband and I had the fantastic and hellish opportunity to teach English at a university in Qingdao, China. Since the nearest branch was sixteen hours by train, we became a con-

gregation of two. There's nothing like distance for perspective. Midway through our stay, we traveled to Hong Kong over Chinese New Year. I couldn't wait for Sunday. I wanted to go to Relief Society.

When I sat in that room filled with women from all over the world, I felt home again. I cried during the opening song. I cried during announcements about home-making meeting. And I bawled when I stood and bore my testimony of Christ and the joy of sisterhood as embodied by that group of beautiful Saints. Like Ursula Le Guin, I wanted to shout: "Listen to other women, your sisters, your mothers, your grandmothers—if you don't hear them, how will you ever understand what your daughter says to you?"<sup>4</sup>

Since returning from Qingdao, I often contemplate the unfavorable conditions for women in China and for women in general. What can be done to ease the burdens and lighten the hearts of women everywhere? I used to feel a new ideology was the solution. I felt that if women could socially and politically assert their worth, they could begin to





discover their power. And in many ways, there are battles to be won with some types of feminist artillery. But, now, I also look to the tools of my mother, and her mother before her, to aid me in helping my sisters.

Many of these tools are in the kitchen. A casserole's merely a mixture of ingredients, but it can be something more. There is something sacred about the loaf of bread or plate of cookies that one woman has created to console another. Many women use cooking to express their love and attentiveness. A casserole can be consecrated. Other women speak through quilting or knitting, each stitch a testament of faith and hope. Ultimately, each woman must find her own tools of liberation.

I have much to learn from my sisters, and I have much to share. So I loan Mom Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, and she gives me Lorraine Trout's Chinese Chicken Salad recipe. And we respect each other.

On Sundays, I attend Relief Society and am happy to be there. I sit next to strangers and schmooze with them about their pretty ring or shake my head in sympathy as they tell me about working a seventy-hour week in a low-paying, dead-end job. At night, I lie in bed and worry about women. I see the faces of my dear Chinese students. I want them to know about the Savior. I want them to unite as sisters and share their strength. I also want them to find happiness, even if it means bucking tradition and telling their parents that they will not marry the man their father has picked. And I want my BYU freshmen to come back next year and the year after, until they graduate—even if they get married. Even if they have babies. I want to be assigned back to the less active sister I used to visit teach so that I can make her chocolate chip cookies and share the sweetness of the gospel.

I HAVE learned to take comfort in tangible things. Tonight, as I lie in bed, my hands finger the quilt that envelops me, and I talk-story to God. It's a habit I started as a child. I lie there and just think, say, or feel whatever is on my mind. As a little girl, I loved rambling to God because there were no interruptions—no phones, no timers, no agendas—only the eternity that lay between me and sleep. As an adult, I find this space even more precious. I listen to my husband's labored breathing, and I breathe with him, imagining that I can breathe away his cold. Tonight, I will ask for his health.

As I pull the quilt tighter around us, I try to imagine the women who made it. The woman in Beijing who sold it to me was old

and tiny, so that is how I envision its creators: tiny hands, tiny bodies, tiny feet made tinier having once been bound, receiving tiny salaries. Such women are the heart of China. Theirs are the dreams of the day when these hands will unite in sisterhood, carrying the load of Christ. They will hear him calling, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. . . . For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matt. 11:28.) And finally, they will know peace.

We sisters in the Relief Society—in fact, all women everywhere—are like this quilt. We are of many colors and patterns, shapes and sizes. United we can create a safe and warm place for people to lie down and find

rest. We are bound together by sisterhood, one of love's greatest forms. As I lie here, this quilt tucks me in, each stitch a kiss, each square a blessing. When I close my eyes, I see myself tying fat yarn on a calico quilt, surrounded by women and babies. My mother and grandmothers are there, showing me how. Homemaking, I mumble, and drift into a delicious sleep. ☞

#### NOTES

1. Ursula K. Le Guin, "Bryn Mawr Commencement Address," in *A Community of Voices: Reading and Writing in the Disciplines*, ed. Toby Fulwiler and Arthur W. Biddle (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992), 397–408.

2. Le Guin, 398.

3. Le Guin, 406.

4. Le Guin, 407.



### THE SWIMMER

He was in the Red Sea, skin-diving, when God gripped his forehead and told him, "Grow your hair long now" and made the fish around him resonate like a configuration of door knobs before someone who wants to go outside. So it was true: God, the universe's greatest spy, knew how he packed his suitcase, knew how much oxygen remained in his lungs as he extended his arms and fluttered his legs twenty feet below the ocean's surface surrounded by blue and black and yellow fish, their tiny jaws clicking open and shut like the latch to the room where, he knew now, God had been watching the day he arranged his dreams into a wreath of inconsolable flowers unfolding with reckless grace until their petals dropped out in clusters and clumps and utter defiance of the lavish capture of time he had first sensed was possible when one day in the library every body of water in the book on *The Lovely Lakes of Europe* had seemed to him a flawless blue masterpiece and the best reason he could give for wanting to learn to swim.

—HOLLY WELKER



# CORNUCOPIA

☉☉☉☉ *Sunraves*

## IDEAS THAT BRING ME HOPE

**G**IVEN THE CHANCE TO RAVE ABOUT THE things that truly matter to me, I respond with relish. In many ways, I suppose, the things most worth raving about are antidotes for the things we rant about. I'm not talking about traffic jams or Rush Limbaugh and his local mimics. I'm thinking about the tragic ironies in our civilization. For all the twentieth century's miracles in medicine, communication, computation, travel, and material production, I look out from my perch and see a world in terrible distress—an American culture in denial and a human family in mortal danger.

The things that I rave about, therefore, are the ideas that bring me hope, offer me perspective, and give me courage. I need these qualities more than anything. Against the depravities of terrorism and war and the capriciousness of new viruses and old injustices—not to mention the “ordinary” brutality toward unloved children and rampant daily offenses against the dignity of life—I anchor my hopes on four things:

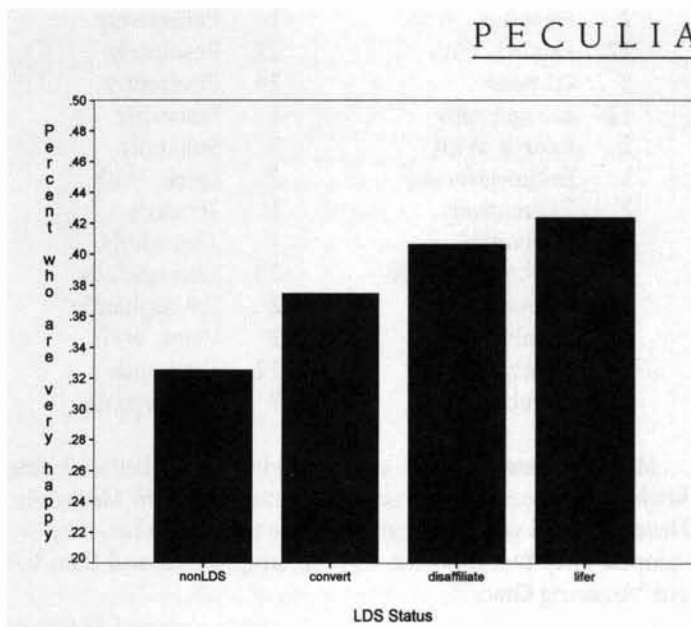
**THE IDEA OF A UNIVERSITY.** The idea of a great and free university is the noblest of all human inventions. Obert Tanner said this, and I believe it. Universities are the only institutions on earth that have as their purpose the unfettered quest for knowledge and truth. Every business, church, and

government aims to indoctrinate us to its view of the world. Universities often do, too, but when they try to indoctrinate us, they violate their own most venerable ideal. Universities strive to be sanctuaries of free thought where information and ideas collide and the best will survive to be tested another day. I take pleasure in trying to make the university to which I am most committed live up to the ideal.

**PERSONAL REVOLUTION.** The power of personal revolution as a means of addressing society's ills offers more hope and fewer avenues of escape than any other philosophy I know. Both Socrates (Know thyself!) and Jesus (Go and sin no more!) taught that the hope for a better world is rooted not so much in changing others as in governing ourselves. Many dictators and well-meaning politicians believe that panaceas for human suffering exist in the form of one “ism” or another. But these two remarkable historical figures took a different tack: discipline ourselves, commit ourselves, and let our lives shine brightly enough that others will choose to do likewise.

**EPIPHANIES.** Paradoxes are at the center of living itself—and epiphanies associated with resolving them are the basis of personal change. Who would deny the bursts of insight that come when opposites suddenly yield fusion? When, for instance, we realize that our quest for solitude and for deep connections with others are each necessary to the fulfillment of the other, that personal freedom and self-discipline are inexorably connected, or that faith and doubt are inter-

## PECULIAR PEOPLE



### PERCENT WHO ARE VERY HAPPY

LIFETIME MEMBERS of the LDS church are more likely to say they are very happy than are residents of the United States in general. Disaffiliates report higher levels of happiness than converts, and both of these groups fall in between lifetime members and the national population.

Results were obtained by combining many national probability surveys of adults taken by the National Opinion Research Center between 1970 and 1991. Respondents were classified on the basis of religious affiliation at age 16 and at the time of the survey. “Lifers” reported being LDS at both times. “Converts” were not LDS at 16, but had joined by the survey date. “Disaffiliates” said they had been LDS at age 16 but no longer are. Everyone else was classified as non-LDS.

dependent, as are life and death, and that individualism cannot be enjoyed without healthy communities and that healthy communities cannot exist without authentic individualism. Many other paradoxes lurk around us, and we all have our favorites. Whatever our favorites, however, there are few things that match the exhilaration I feel each time I discover, or rediscover, that two profound truths, which appear to be opposite, are not opposite at all, but simply two concepts necessary to each other's realization. These epiphanies are among my richest moments.

**TEACHING.** Creating conditions that may bring others to their own moments of insight, regardless of the subject, is my chief protest against reality. It brings me in contact with two wellsprings of constant renewal: enduring ideas that have lasted millennia and youthful minds who see life afresh. I speak of the ideas that have shaped civilizations and endured through life, literature, and history: justice and mercy, liberty and equality, truth and beauty, and many others. Every youth and each rising generation must learn to understand and give life to these ideas, but students (whatever their age) tend to embrace them with enthusiasm, wrestle mightily with the paradoxes among them, and seek valiantly to place them at the center of their lives. Being a part of this ceaseless process is truly a privilege worth raving about.

The ideas we carry around in our heads make all the difference in our lives because they shape our understanding of ourselves and give meaning to our world. These four ideas—university, personal revolution, epiphany, and teaching—give me reason to rejoice. And I do.

—L. JACKSON NEWELL

## REVERENTLY, QUIETLY, . . . MAJESTICALLY?

*My soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads.*

—Doctrine and Covenants 25:12

ALEXANDER POPE, in "An Essay on Criticism," wrote that "some to church repair, / Not for the doctrine, but for the music there." I have found considerable peace in this approach. I no longer struggle with questions like "When is the world going to end?" My mind is now free to dwell on weightier matters like "What are those directions in the upper-left-hand corner of each hymn?" The First Presidency's preface to the current LDS hymnal advises all to "ponder [the hymns], recite and sing them" (x). With that in mind, I turned to "Using the Hymnbook" where I learned that "The mood markings, such as *Prayerfully* or *Resolutely*, suggest the general feeling or spirit of a hymn, although the mood of some hymns may vary according to the occasion or local preference" (379).

There are forty-two moods in which to sing a hymn in our



There are forty-two moods in which to sing a hymn in our hymnbook, but I struggle to find the distinction between "Exultantly" and "With Exultation."

hymnbook. For example, hymn #268 is to be sung *With Motion*. What does that mean? Is it anything like *Broadly* (#269), or is it closer to *Reflectively* (#154)? I know nothing about music theory, and from my admittedly naïve point of view, I struggle to find the distinction between *Exultantly* and *With Exultation*, *Reverently* and *Worshipfully*, or *Gently* and *Tenderly*.

Here is an alphabetical list of all the mood marks along with the number of times they appear in the hymnal. As you can see, *Fervently* is the big winner, while twelve hymns have mood marks that are unique to them.

18	Boldly	27	Joyfully
19	Brightly	2	Jubilantly
1	Broadly	2	Lightly
8	Calmly	18	Majestically
4	Cheerfully	1	Meekly
1	Confidently	1	Motion, With
1	Contemplation, With	12	Peacefully
4	Conviction, With	20	Prayerfully
2	Devotion, With	1	Reflectively
22	Dignity, With	22	Resolutely
5	Earnestly	24	Reverently
12	Energetically	1	Smoothly
2	Energy, With	5	Solemnly
1	Enthusiastically	2	Spirit, With
2	Expressively	1	Tenderly
4	Exultantly	1	Thankfully
1	Exultation, With	23	Thoughtfully
30	Fervently	2	Triumphantly
3	Firmly	2	Vigor, With
14	Gently	12	Vigorously
1	Humbly	7	Worshipfully

My own musical skills are so lacking that whether I sing *Brightly* or *Solemnly*, I am sure it sounds like *With Mediocrity*. Nevertheless, I wonder what they were thinking when they developed forty-two different ways to sing hymns and then left out "Amazing Grace."

—KAI PEARSON

*I'm a reader, an editor, and a writer. Taking words seriously is what I do.  
And the struggle to see how a message may apply to me is also part of  
taking President Hunter seriously as the Lord's prophet.*

## “COME BACK”: MAJOR ADDRESSES OF HOWARD W. HUNTER, 1959–94

*By Lavina Fielding Anderson*

### INTRODUCTION

**H**OWARD W. HUNTER WAS AN IMPORTANT person to our family. My husband, Paul, grew up in the Pasadena Stake in California, where Stake President Hunter, then an attorney, provided vigorous and personalized leadership. When Howard W. Hunter became an apostle, he was always “our apostle” to my parents-in-law, as he was to thousands of Californians.

When Paul and I became engaged in 1977, Paul diffidently asked Elder Hunter to perform our marriage and was warmed by the gladness of his reply. We were disappointed when he had to substitute for another general authority at a weekend conference and, hence, would be out of town for our wedding, but we understood. But on the Sunday afternoon before our wedding, he called our home and said he had come back early. He did not want to interfere with any other arrangements we had made but would love to attend our sealing. We were overjoyed. Later we reconstructed the amazing chain of phone calls a busy and travel-weary apostle had made to track us down.

In the temple, he was unhurried, gracious, and cordial, treating my parents, who were strangers to him, with the same warmth he showered on Paul's parents, who were old friends. His humor put the guests at ease. His reverence made the rolling phrases of the sealing ceremony ring with power.

He has been a special part of our prayers ever since, particularly as he suffered the loss of his first wife and then a series of hammer blows to his own health. We always enjoyed his conference talks, although, to be candid, it was more because of

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who he was to us rather than for their content. Then, in 1990, he began a stunning series of Christ-centered addresses that lifted prophetic discourse to new heights. Paul and I both frequently had tears in our eyes as we listened to him. I revisited the talks in the *Ensign* with a lump in my throat. President Hunter was ill and did not speak at general conference in October 1993, the month after my stake president excommunicated me; we wondered what he might have said.

In the waning years of President Ezra Taft Benson's presidency, we shrank from the thought that President Hunter, in his frail health, would have to assume the burdens of the presidency, but we still prayed that he would be spared to bless the members of the Church with a continuation of the same clear and powerful vision, despite his physical weakness. We needed him so.

I remember thinking during sacrament meeting on Sunday morning, 5 June 1994, that his ordination as prophet was probably occurring about that time in the temple. I breathed a silent prayer of gratitude for what President Hunter had already given the Church, with the urgent hope that he would be strengthened for years to come. Learning in January 1995 that his 1980 cancer had recurred and metastasized to his bones was like a physical blow. Sadness subdued our feelings in the remaining weeks of his life as we prayed for his relief from pain and, finally, his release, which came on 3 March 1995.

On Monday morning, 6 June 1994, when he held his first press conference as Church president, I was away from either television or radio and was startled to see Paul appear in the middle of the day with a copy of his statement (see sidebar). I had exactly the same reaction as I did to the announcement in 1978 that all worthy men, including blacks, could be ordained to the priesthood. Chills ran over my body. My hands and knees started to shake. I started to cry; and even when I thought I was perfectly calm, I couldn't talk without my voice breaking. This reaction lasted for hours. The Spirit was confirming to me that I was hearing a prophetic voice, and I responded to it with intense gratitude. Many people heard his



## Statement at Press Conference, 6 June 1994

There are two invitations I would like to leave with the members of the Church as we strive to keep the commandments of God and receive the full measure of His blessings. First of all, I would invite all members of the Church to live with evermore attention to the life and example of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially the love and hope and compassion He displayed.

I pray that we might treat each other with more kindness, more courtesy, more humility and patience and forgiveness. We do have high expectations of one another, and all can improve. Our world cries out for more disciplined living of the commandments of God. But the way we are to encourage that, as the Lord told the Prophet Joseph in the wintry depths of Liberty Jail, is "by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; . . . without hypocrisy, and without guile." (D&C 121:41-42.)

To those who have transgressed or been offended, we say, come back. To those who are hurt and struggling and afraid, we say let us stand with you and dry your tears. To those who are confused and assailed by error on every side, we say, come to the God of all truth and the Church of continuing revelation. Come back. Stand with us. Carry on. Be believing. All is well, and all will be well. Feast at the table laid before you in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and strive to follow the Good Shepherd who has provided it. Have hope, exert faith, receive—and give—charity, the pure love of Christ.

Secondly, and in that same spirit, I also invite the members of the Church to establish the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of their membership and the supernal setting for their most sacred covenants. It would be the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of Church temple worthy. I would hope that every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend, even if proximity to a temple does not allow immediate or frequent use of it.

Let us be a temple-attending and temple-loving people. Let us hasten to the temple as frequently as time and means and personal circumstances allow. Let us go not only for our kindred dead, but let us also go for the personal blessings of temple worship, for the sanctity and safety which is provided within those hallowed and consecrated walls. The temple is a place of beauty, it is a place of revelation, it is a place of peace. It is the house of the Lord. It is holy unto the Lord. It should be holy unto us.<sup>1</sup>

"come back" message and assumed that he was announcing a policy change that would halt the attack on scholars and feminists. I did not. I sensed that the outpouring of the Spirit I was feeling was a confirmation to me of President Hunter's prophetic calling but not a promise of a reversal. Not then nor afterward did I feel that my personal ordeal was over.

However, I think President Hunter's statement changed things for the Church. What he did was preach the gospel, and the word of God "is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, soul and spirit; . . . a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (D&C 33:1.) Preaching the gospel is a radical, electrifying, powerful thing to do in a Church that is often driven by programs, bureaucracy, routine, and pressures for conformity.

This paper sets President Hunter's 6 June statement in the broader context of eighty messages given since he became a general authority in October 1959. They were published in the *Ensign*, the *Improvement Era*, or in *That We Might Have Joy*, in a collection of his essays published in 1994.<sup>2</sup>

### PRESIDENT HUNTER'S MAJOR ADDRESSES, 1959-94

CONSIDER the topics he spoke on during his apostleship. Thirteen of all of Howard Hunter's addresses were for specialized occasions or audiences—an address to singles or a talk about the centennial of the Tabernacle. Eighteen focused on religious practices such as sacrament, prayer, and reading the scriptures. Eighteen dealt with such principles as faith, peace, and the importance of law. Fifteen dealt either with Easter or with a single-scriptural event or parable of Christ. A final group of seven, all delivered between April 1990 and April 1994, focused intensely on living a Christ-like life.

Typically, President Hunter's addresses were neither spectacular nor sensational. He seldom discussed in detail social issues, controversial topics, or Church programs. His talks were somewhat conventional and traditional in content and organization, though more carefully crafted than many. They are usually focused on a single idea and developed through a chain of associated ideas or a list. He rarely used personal references, told illustrative stories, or quoted other authors. Of his quotations, 48 percent were from other general authorities. (See the appendix on page 24, "Messages of Howard W. Hunter, 1950-95," which contains the citations to the addresses quoted below.)

Though free from conspicuous rhetorical flourishes, President Hunter's addresses have a distinctive eloquence. For example, there is an epigrammatic quality to this statement: "Contrition is costly—it costs us our pride and our insensitivity, but it especially costs us our sins." In his conclusion to this same address, observe the simple but powerful effect of four sentences of mostly single-syllable words, parallel to each other in construction: "May we be more devoted and disciplined followers of Christ. May we cherish him in our thoughts and speak his name with love. May we kneel before



him with meekness and mercy. May we bless and serve others that they may do the same.”<sup>3</sup>

A change in his speeches came in April 1990. The previous conference had been President Benson’s last public address. I believe that President Hunter, then senior apostle, accepted the mantle that he saw was coming. From that point, he spoke in a prophetic voice. His addresses were new in passionate pleading for more Christ-like living, their intense focus on the Savior, and their structure—organized around a single extended example.

#### THE PROPHET’S INVITATION TO ENHANCE TEMPLE WORSHIP

**E**VEN though President Hunter was president of or on the board of the Genealogical Society of Utah from 1960 to 1975, he gave only one major address on genealogy and temple work, in 1971. Thus, the temple was a new theme for him as Church President. I interpreted his press conference invitation to be wholly within the spirit of bringing temple blessings, including eternal family sealings, within the reach of more members of the Church, a trend that began during the presidency of David O. McKay and accelerated dramatically during the presidency of Spencer W. Kimball. The pattern of increased temple building recognizes the increasingly large segment of Church membership outside Utah. I believe that the main motivation behind increased temple building and renewed emphasis on increased temple attendance is a desire that all worthy members of the Church may share in temple blessings. I rejoice in these efforts to bring full gospel blessings to all members, although I am saddened when they too often are reduced to measuring temple attendance over temple worship.

Another possible outcome from focusing the attention of members on the temple may be the strengthening of group identification. Mormon identity has always depended to a great extent on differences: the Book of Mormon, polygamy, the Word of Wisdom, etc. An increasingly diverse membership, many of whom have been members of the Church for only a few years (not generations), needs a shared symbol of the faith that transcends national, cultural, and ethnic barriers. Mormon historian Michael Quinn argues that a redefinition of the presidential office into the icon of “the prophet,” attended by increased awe and reverence for the man who occupies that office, occurred during the presidency of David O. McKay.<sup>4</sup> If Quinn is correct, and I believe he is, then the president of the Church has become a symbol of Church unity in much the same way that respect for the reigning monarch in Great Britain provides a common symbol to members of the Commonwealth.

However, I feel that it has been increasingly difficult for members of the Church to sustain a high level of identification with the prophet during periods of prolonged illness, and as Mormon historian Jan Shipps notes, it is difficult to transfer these feelings about a prophet to a committee of apostles.<sup>5</sup> During the closing years of President Benson’s presidency,

when he had not appeared or spoken at several general conferences, I listened in my ward fast and testimony meeting as adults bore fervent but slightly defiant testimonies that they knew he was “still a prophet.” The outpouring of love for and interest in President Hunter and the genuine joy manifested at his ordination certainly had a great deal to do with his loving personality. But I think it also manifested a good deal of relief at the end of the five-year hiatus in leadership. President Hunter immediately launched a vigorous travel schedule that took him to Nauvoo, Switzerland, Arizona, and California; he gave dedicatory addresses and prayers in the multi-day ceremonies for the Orlando Florida Temple and the Bountiful Utah Temple, inaugurated BYU-Hawaii president Eric Shumway, and in Mexico organized the Church’s 2,000th stake. On weekends when he was not traveling, he still made a number of public appearances and/or addresses: he spoke to missionaries at the Missionary Training Center by satellite, addressed the Relief Society general meeting, spoke three times at October general conference, was honored at the hundredth anniversary of the Genealogy Society, and spoke at the First Presidency’s Christmas fireside. The *LDS Church News* covered all of these events in detail. Hundreds of thousands attended these events or read about them. At last, the Church again had a president who moved among his people.

I rejoiced with the other Saints at this blessing of presence, even while I felt pained at President Hunter’s obvious frailty. The commendable frankness of Church leaders in announcing his second (though not his first) hospitalization and the saddening news of his cancer’s recurrence and metastasization called forth renewed prayers and faith on President Hunter’s behalf from members of the Church. But it also confirmed our feelings that the days of his leadership were precious because they were few. Although President Gordon B. Hinckley’s vigor and assurance are a reassuring message in themselves, it seems inevitable that the pattern of an aging and increasingly inaccessible president will repeat itself sooner or later. The increased attention to the temple provides the Church with another unifying symbol besides the office of prophet.

#### *President Hunter’s Temple-Related Statements*

**P**RESIDENT HUNTER made a total of ten reported statements about the temple between June 1994 and February 1995, not counting dedicatory addresses and prayers at the Orlando and Bountiful temples. The first was his press statement, set like a lighthouse at the beginning of his presidency. This invitation was notable in its conscious designation of the temple as a “symbol” of membership, an aspect of temple work that has not, to my knowledge, been made before. He also distinguished between temple worthiness and temple attendance, a sensitive acknowledgement to members outside the core region of Mormonism whose access to the temple is still limited. Perhaps most important, the motivations employed in this invitation were all positive. There were no appeals to authority, no commands, no warnings about what would happen if members failed to accept this invitation,

## *Evolution of an Invitation:* “Be a Temple-Loving People”

*On two subsequent occasions to his press conference, President Hunter expanded his call for increased temple worship, emphasizing the significance of temple marriage and temple work as a direct pathway to millennial world peace.*

## 1.

*Press statement, 6 June 1994.*

Secondly, and in that same spirit, I also invite the members of the Church to establish the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of their membership and the supernal setting for their most sacred covenants. It would be the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of Church temple worthy. I would hope that every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend, even if proximity to a temple does not allow immediate or frequent use of it.

Let us be a temple-attending and temple-loving people. Let us hasten to the temple as frequently as time and means and personal circumstances allow. Let us go not only for our kindred dead, but let us also go for the personal blessings of temple worship, for the sanctity and safety which is provided within those hallowed and consecrated walls. The temple is a place of beauty, it is a place of revelation, it is a place of peace. It is the house of the Lord. It is holy unto the Lord. It should be holy unto us.

## 2.

*“Follow the Son of God,” and “Exceeding Great and Precious Promises,” general conference address, 1 October 1994.*

It would please the Lord if every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend. The things that we must do and not do to be worthy of a temple recommend are the very things that ensure we will be happy as individuals and as families.

Let us be a temple-attending people. Attend the temple as frequently as personal circumstances allow. Keep a picture of a temple in your home that your children may see it. Teach them about the purposes of the house of the Lord. Have them plan from their earliest years to go there and to remain worthy of that blessing.

And we again emphasize the personal blessings of temple worship and the sanctity and safety that are provided within those hallowed walls. It is the house of the Lord, a place of revelation and of peace. As we attend the temple, we learn more richly and deeply the purpose of life and the significance of the

atonement sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us make the temple, with temple worship and temple covenants and temple marriage, our ultimate earthly goal and the supreme mortal experience.

Let us share with our children the spiritual feelings we have in the temple. And let us teach them more earnestly and more comfortably the things we can appropriately say about the purposes of the house of the Lord.

Let us prepare every missionary to go to the temple worthily and to make that experience an even greater highlight than receiving the mission call. Let us plan for and teach and plead with our children to marry in the house of the Lord. Let us reaffirm more vigorously than we ever have in the past that it does matter where you marry and by what authority you are pronounced man and wife.

All of our efforts in proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead lead to the holy temple. This is because the temple ordinances are absolutely crucial; we cannot return to God's presence without them. I encourage everyone to worthily attend the temple or to work toward the day when you can enter that holy house to receive your ordinances and covenants.

May you let the meaning and beauty and peace of the temple come into your everyday life more directly in order that the millennial day may come, that promised time when “they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. . . . [but shall] walk in the light of the Lord.” (Isa. 2:4–5.)

. . . And now, my beloved brothers and sisters, through the power and authority of the priesthood vested in me and by virtue of the calling which I now hold, I invoke my blessings upon you. I bless you in your efforts to live a more Christlike life. I bless you with an increased desire to be worthy of a temple recommend and to attend the temple as frequently as circumstances allow.

## 3.

*“A Temple-Motivated People,” Ensign, February 1995, 2–5.*

Thus, it should be no surprise to us that the Lord does desire that his people be a

temple-motivated people. I repeat what I have said before: It would please the Lord for every adult member to be worthy of—and to carry—a current temple recommend, even if proximity to a temple does not allow immediate or frequent use of it. The things that we must do and not do to be worthy of a temple recommend are the very things that ensure we will be happy as individuals and as families.

Let us truly be a temple-attending and a temple-loving people. We should hasten to the temple as frequently, yet prudently, as personal circumstances allow. As we attend the temple, we learn more richly and deeply the purpose of life and the significance of the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us make the temple, with temple worship and temple covenants and temple marriage, our ultimate earthly goal and the supreme mortal experience.

Let us share with our children the spiritual feelings we have in the temple. And let us teach them more earnestly and more comfortably the things we can appropriately say about the purposes of the house of the Lord. Keep a picture of a temple in your home that your children may see it. Teach them about the purposes of the house of the Lord. Have them plan from their earliest years to go there and to remain worthy of that blessing. Let us prepare every missionary to go to the temple worthily and to make that experience an even greater highlight than receiving the mission call. Let us plan for and teach and plead with our children to marry in the house of the Lord. Let us reaffirm more vigorously than we ever have in the past that it does matter where you marry and by what authority you are pronounced man and wife.

All of our efforts in proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead lead to the holy temple. This is because the temple ordinances are absolutely crucial; we cannot return to God's presence without them. I encourage everyone to worthily attend the temple or to work toward the day when you can enter that holy house to receive your ordinances and covenants.

As the prophets have said, the temple is a place of beauty; it is a place of revelation; it is a place of peace. It is the house of the Lord. It is holy unto the Lord. It must be holy and important unto us.

and no stressed citation of duty to the dead. Instead, he spoke of “loving” the temple and seeking “personal blessings” of sanctity, safety, beauty, and revelation. It was a call for holiness and a promise that there is a personal dimension as well as a corporate dimension to temple worship. If faithful women and men are going to the house of the Lord at a prophet’s invitation with the expectation of increased holiness, I fully expect the results to be increased revelation and personal power for all Latter-day Saints. (See “Evolution of an Invitation: Be a Temple-Loving People” on page 18.)

Only twenty days after his inaugural statement, President Hunter delivered three addresses in Nauvoo to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the martyrdoms of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. In two of the three, he commented on temple work, including our responsibility to the dead. President Hunter also spoke on temples at conferences in Arizona and Mexico and in each of his three October 1994 general conference addresses.<sup>6</sup>

In his closing remarks, President Hunter returned to the theme of temple attendance, repeating and expanding the part of his 6 June statement that stressed the beauty and personal blessings of temple experiences:

All of our efforts in proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead lead to the holy temple. This is because the temple ordinances are absolutely crucial; we cannot attend to God’s presence without them. I encourage everyone to worthily attend the temple or to work toward the day when you can enter that holy house to receive your ordinances and covenants.

May you let the meaning and beauty and peace of the temple come into your everyday life more directly in order that the millennial day may come, that promised time when “they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. . . . [but shall] walk in the light of the Lord.” (Isa. 2:4–5.)

In this iteration of the temple theme, President Hunter made an extraordinary, powerful, and poignant promise, linking temple worship with the longed-for millennial peace that has always included both personal peace of mind and political peace between nations. It is a promise that resonates deeply, comforting and steadying in our chaotic and violent society.

President Hunter also positioned the temple as the peak spiritual experience in mortality. Interestingly, he did not make specific promises about what will occur in the temple to create this spirituality, but placed the responsibility on the member: “Let us *make* the temple, with temple worship and temple covenants and temple marriage, our ultimate earthly goal and the supreme mortal experience.”

Unquestionably, the Saints are responding to President Hunter’s second invitation. Without providing any statistics, Gaylan Gallacher, Provo Temple recorder, in October 1994, confirmed “a very measurable increase in attendance” in response to President Hunter’s call to attend the temple more fre-

quently. Other anecdotal reports also indicate increased temple attendance.

I hope that many people accept President Hunter’s invitation and become worthy or maintain worthiness to go to the House of the Lord, and do so often, willingly, and joyfully. But most of the statements I have heard about the temple on the local level are designed to produce guilt.<sup>7</sup> I regret that pressure from leaders may load the temple experience with anxiety for some members, making it not an invitation accepted but an obligation discharged. I also regret that some members, resisting the pressure, may refuse the invitation and thereby cut themselves off from what may be a source of great spiritual strength.

Still, I anticipate that temple attendance will assume new importance in Mormon culture as a result of President Hunter’s emphasis, in ways that will focus, stabilize, and bring joy to many members of the Church.

#### THE INVITATION TO “COME BACK”

PRESIDENT HUNTER’S invitation to live a more Christ-like life and (to those who are alienated) to “come back” was, for him, like his temple invitation, a lighthouse that had not flashed this signal before. In 1985, the First Presidency issued a Christmas message: “To those who have ceased activity and to those who have become critical, we say, ‘Come back. Come back and feast at the table of the Lord, and taste again the sweet and satisfying fruits of fellowship with the Saints.’” Other general authorities, but not Elder Hunter, had followed with similar calls.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, it was highly significant, in my opinion, that President Hunter directed part of his inaugural statement “to those who have transgressed or been offended, . . . who are hurt and struggling and afraid, [or] . . . are confused and assailed by error.” I responded with gratitude and appreciation. However, despite President Hunter’s strong statements about personal integrity, personal commitment to Christ, and the importance of agency, there is no indication in his remarks that the Church itself could ever create conflicts for a member in any of these areas. His addresses as an apostle affirm a predictable pattern of orderliness and obedience for members. The 1990–94 addresses, which focused on Christ and Christian living, hold up a shining standard of *individual* faith and behavior. However, at his opening statement, his presidential statements demonstrated what I interpret as an increasing focus on administrative concerns and a diminished focus on Christian living, by comparison with the 1990–94 addresses.

#### *Apostolic Addresses*

THE flavor of Apostle Hunter’s traditional-style orthodoxy is apparent in these typical statements: “We have the benefits of modern scholarship and scientific advances without turning to the theories of the modernist. . . . Truth is eternal and never changing, and the gospel of Jesus



## Evolution of an Invitation: “Come Back”

*President Hunter's 6 June invitation to “Come back” evolved through subsequent deliveries in ways that, to me, eroded its promise in small but significant ways.*

1.

*Press statement, 6 June 1994.*

I would invite all members of the Church to live with ever-more attention to the life and example of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially the love and hope and compassion He displayed.

I pray that we might treat each other with more kindness, more courtesy, more humility and patience and forgiveness. We do have high expectations of one another, and all can improve. Our world cries out for more disciplined living of the commandments of God. But the way we are to encourage that, as the Lord told the Prophet Joseph in the wintry depths of Liberty Jail, is “by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; . . . without hypocrisy, and without guile.”

To those who have transgressed or been offended, we say come back. To those who are hurt and struggling and afraid, we say let us stand with you and dry your tears. To those who are confused and assailed by error on every side, we say come to the God of all truth and the Church of continuing revelation. Come back. Stand with us. Carry on. Be believing. All is well, and all will be well. Feast at the table laid before you in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and strive to follow the Good Shepherd who has provided it. Have hope, exert faith, receive—and give—charity, the pure love of Christ.

2.

*“He Invites Us to Follow Him”*

*(First Presidency Message), Ensign, Sept. 1994, 2.*

Several months ago an invitation was given to members of the Church as we strive to keep the commandments of God and receive the full measure of his blessings. The invitation was for all members of the Church to live with ever more attention to the life and example of the Lord Jesus Christ, emulating the love and hope and compassion he displayed.

We were asked to treat each other with more kindness, more courtesy, more humility and patience and forgiveness. We do have high expectations of one another, and all can improve. Our world cries out for more disciplined living of the commandments of God. But the way we are to encourage that, as the Lord told the Prophet Joseph in the wintry depths of Liberty Jail, is “by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; . . . without hypocrisy, and without guile” (D&C 121:41–42). We may feast at the table laid before us in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and strive to follow the Good Shepherd who has provided it.

3.

*“Exceeding Great and Precious Promises,”  
general conference address, 1 October 1994.*

At that time of my call, I issued two invitations to the members of the Church. I feel impressed to give these continued emphasis.

First, I invite all members of the Church to live with ever more attention to the life and

example of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially the love and hope and compassion He displayed. I pray that we will treat each other with more kindness, more courtesy, and forgiveness.

To those who have transgressed or been offended, we say, come back. The path of repentance, though hard at times, lifts one ever upward and leads to a perfect forgiveness.

To those who are hurt or are struggling and afraid, we say, let us stand with you and dry your tears. Come back. Stand with us in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Take literally his invitation to “come, follow me.” (See Matt. 16:24; 19:21; Mark 8:34; 10:21; Luke 9:23; 18:22; John 21:22; D&C 38:22.) He is the only sure way; he is the light of the world.

We will, as you would expect us to do, continue to hold to the high standards of conduct which define a Latter-day Saint. It is the Lord who has established those standards, and we are not free to set them aside.

Let us study the Master's every teaching and devote ourselves more fully to his example. He has given us “all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” He has “called us to glory and virtue” and has “given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these [we] might be partakers of the divine nature.” (2 Pet. 1:3-4.)

I believe in those “exceeding great and precious promises,” and I invite all within the sound of my voice to claim them. We should strive to “be partakers of the divine nature.” Only then may we truly hope for “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.” (D&C 59:23.)

Christ is ever contemporary in a changing world.<sup>9</sup> “We know that this is the true and living church institutionally, but am I a true and living member individually?”<sup>10</sup> In October 1982, he used an Old Testament example to praise unquestioning obedience: “Surely the Lord loves, more than anything else, an unwavering determination to obey his counsel. Surely the experiences of the great prophets of the Old Testament have been recorded to help us understand the importance of choosing the path of strict obedience. How pleased the Lord must have been when Abraham, after receiving direction to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, did as he was instructed, without question and without wavering.”<sup>11</sup>

On only two occasions, Elder Hunter drew a contrast between the spirit and the letter of the law. In 1978, he contrasted Paul's use of religion (as “a form of worship” and as “a religion of iron rules, laws and traditions inherited from his Hebrew lineage”) with that of James, who “very pointedly defines what he refers to as pure religion, as distinguished from forms of ritualistic worship and iron rules of practice as described by Paul.”<sup>12</sup>

The second occasion was in his April 1990 general conference address. He called for stronger commitment, then added: “Please understand that I do not speak only of a commitment to the Church and its activities, although that always needs to

be strengthened. No, I speak more specifically of a commitment that is shown in our individual behavior, in our personal integrity, in our loyalty to home and family and community, as well as to the Church."<sup>13</sup>

There is also no question that Elder Hunter took a conservative position on theological and scholarly issues. In a 1970 denunciation of "the twisted teachings of the modernist," which is unique among President Hunter's conference talks for its level of anxiety, he denounced biblical criticism, attempts to "modernize" the Bible, alternate forms of spirituality, and the "so-called new morality." He insisted: "We need to study the simple fundamentals of the truths taught by the Master and eliminate the controversial. Our faith in God needs to be real and not speculative. . . . If it is old-fashioned to believe in the Bible, we should thank God for the privilege of being old-fashioned."<sup>14</sup>

Apostle Hunter did not seem unduly fearful about intellectuals, the politically oriented, or other special interest groups. His addresses portray divisiveness as bad, not because it is incorrect theology, displeasing to God, or dangerous to the Church, but because it reduces the quality of group life. In April 1976, he made his only direct statement, before becoming president, against internal disharmony. It is traditional in that disagreements are defined as exclusively individual rather than possibly organizational; he suggests no remedies except for individual repentance:

However great the need may be for unity within nations, there is ever greater need for harmony and interdependence within the worldwide church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

[He then quoted 1 Corinthians 12:21, in which one part of the body cannot say to another, "I have no need of thee," then continued:] Nor can the North Americans say to the Asians, nor the Europeans to the islanders of the sea, "I have no need of thee." No, in this church we have need of every member, and we pray, as did Paul when he wrote to the church in Corinth, "that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. . . ." Our ideas may not always be quite like those who preside in authority over us, but this is the Lord's church and he will bless each of us as we cast off pride, pray for strength, and contribute to the good of the whole.

By the same token, I know of no stronger weapons in the hands of the adversary against any group of men or women in this church than the weapons of divisiveness, faultfinding, and antagonism.<sup>15</sup>

As Church president, he repeated these two paragraphs in Mexico in December 1995.<sup>16</sup> This approach does not acknowledge the existence of a category of peaceful and productive disagreement, legitimate questions, or dissent from the "ideas of those who preside over us." It suggests that any negativity is exclusively a result of the member's pride and weakness and that the Church itself bears no responsibility either to remove conditions that are causing problems for members or

in providing support to a member who is working through negative feelings.

#### *Presidential Addresses*

**A**S Church president, Howard W. Hunter strongly affirmed hierarchical authority. About a fourth of his opening address at October general conference described the authority of his counselors and the Twelve, who carry the work on when the prophet is ill. In his closing remarks, he further counseled Saints to follow the general authorities.

I also saw an intensifying trend toward authoritarianism during President Hunter's brief presidency. His invitation to "come back," as it reappeared in his presidential speeches, shows a number of textual changes that have altered the original statement, eroding the promise of his press conference in small but, to me, serious ways. (See "Evolution of an Invitation: 'Come Back.'")

#### MESSAGES TO WOMEN

**I**HAVE a particular interest in President Hunter's messages to women, given the intensified pressure in the Church during the 1970s and 1980s to encourage women to concentrate on their opportunities as mothers. While this goal is unquestionably worthy, the strategies used by some have been to close off other options for women, blame working women for social ills ranging from abortion and divorce rates to juvenile delinquency, and "correlate" women's programs to the point where the voices women hear in their own Relief Society manual feature seven or eight quotations from general authorities for every one from a woman. Given Jesus' radical acceptance of women as disciples and his culture-breaking affirmation of their inherent worth, did President Hunter's messages, particularly after his ordination as prophet, manifest possible expansions in the limited roles now permitted LDS women?

I feel that President Hunter was an extraordinarily generous and loving individual whose innate decency forbade ill-treatment of anyone; but I also think that he was very much a product of his generation. In this view, men should protect women, not accept them as full partners; the continued exclusion of women from full membership in the Church was not only inevitable but also righteous.

For example, Elder Hunter's conference talks as an apostle are very much in the cultural mainstream of the 1960s and 1970s. They include only two stories about nonscriptural women: Mary Fielding Smith's faithfulness in paying her tithing, and Mary Ann Baker's writing the faith-affirming "Master, the Tempest Is Raging" after the death of her brother.<sup>17</sup>

Interestingly, in 1987, as President of the Council of the Twelve, President Hunter made a reference rare among general authorities to Mother in Heaven, by quoting a passage from Spencer W. Kimball's *Faith Precedes the Miracle* in which Elder Kimball quotes turn-of-the-century apostle Orson F. Whitney

on adversity: "It is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we come here to acquire and which will make us more like our Father and Mother in heaven."<sup>18</sup>

On the issue of work for women, Elder Hunter took a traditional position but was fair to women in cases where employment was a "necessity." Addressing the welfare session in October 1975, he described his efforts to complete law school at night while holding a full-time job. His wife stayed home with their second son (a first had died), and a third was born during these years. He paid her a tribute, then made a broader statement about women as homemakers before encouraging women to prepare for the possibility of supporting themselves:

Our wives deserve great credit for the heavy work load they carry day in and day out within our homes. No one expends more energy than a devoted mother and wife. In the usual arrangement of things, however, it is the man to whom the Lord has assigned the breadwinner's role.

There are impelling reasons for our sisters to plan toward employment also. We want them to obtain all the education and vocational training possible before marriage. If they become widowed or divorced and need to work, we want them to have dignified and rewarding employment. If a sister does not marry, she has every right to engage in a profession that allows her to magnify her talents and gifts.<sup>19</sup>

Claire Jeffs Hunter worked as assistant personnel manager at a department store after the death of their first child "to keep her mind off her heartbreak," Eleanor Knowles's biography of President Hunter explains. Knowles quotes his careful explanation: "This was the only time during our marriage that Claire was employed."<sup>20</sup>

In 1992, he also gave what I consider to be his most important message to women. As president of the Twelve, he addressed the general women's meeting on 26 September, eighteen months after his marriage to Inis Eagan Stanton. As Church president, he repeated this talk on 24 September 1994 (retitled "Stand Firm in the Faith") at the General Relief Society Meeting.<sup>21</sup> Both messages were warm, respectful, loving, and empowering. However, a pattern of differences between the earlier and later versions left the presidential version, in my opinion, much less empowering for women. Here are seven of the differences.

1. He quoted Moses 1:30: "For . . . this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." In the earlier version, he explained that "man" was "the generic scriptural term which also means woman," but did not give this gender-inclusive explanation in the later version.

2. In the earlier version, but not in the later one, he stated that Jesus "enjoyed the company of women and had close friends among them."

3. In the first version, but not in the second, he referred to women as Christ's "daughter-disciples" who "are privileged to have been given . . . the gift of the Holy Ghost."

4. In the earlier version, he made a personal statement of

extraordinary vulnerability:

As special witnesses of our Savior, we [general authorities] have been given the awesome assignment to administer the affairs of his church and kingdom and to minister to his daughters and his sons wherever they are on the face of the earth. By reason of our call to testify, govern, and minister, it is required of us that despite age, infirmity, exhaustion, and feelings of inadequacy, we do the work he has given us to do, to the last breath of our lives.

He then pled with Mormon women to stand "with us and for us in stemming the tide of evil that threatens to engulf us." I responded to this appeal with deep emotion. It was the first time that I felt women were being told that they were *needed*, as well as honored and respected. That plea remained in the second version, but the paragraph expressing personal vulnerability was omitted, diminishing the impact of the appeal.

5. In the earlier version, President Hunter said that Jesus "needed the women of his time for a comforting hand, a listening ear, a believing heart, a kind look, an encouraging word, loyalty—even in his hour of humiliation, agony, and death" (emphasis added). In the later version, Jesus did not need women; he "looked to" them to provide these services.

6. President Hunter closed his earlier speech by asking the Lord's blessing on women as they served others and "as you strive to become all that you have the potential to become." In the later speech, this conclusion was condensed to "May the Lord bless you as you stand firm in the faith."

7. In the earlier version, he said: "Sisters, continue to seek opportunities for services. Don't be overly concerned with status. Do you recall the counsel of the Savior regarding those who seek the 'chief seats' or the 'uppermost rooms'? . . . It is important to be appreciated. But our focus should be on righteousness, not recognition; on service, not status."<sup>22</sup> In a context of recent addresses lauding "priesthood protocol," his encouragement to women to seek service, not status, was a refreshing corrective, but it seems to have been aimed at the wrong audience and had to be read as a rebuke, however gently phrased. It was not in the later version.<sup>23</sup>

This address to women, which President Hunter delivered twice (once as president of the Twelve and once as president of the Church), sets what I see as a pattern in his public statements. These statements are generous, spiritual, and kindly. They breathe a loving warmth and faith that I can compare only with President Kimball at his mellowest and President McKay at his most eloquent. But taken as a whole, they do not empower women. They reinforce a traditional view that sees women as limited in their contributions and circumscribed in their roles.

President Hunter gave a lengthy address at the October 1994 general priesthood meeting that, though directed at men, also includes some important messages for women.<sup>24</sup> He commanded "perfect moral fidelity" and told men to "express regularly . . . reverence and respect" for their wives. Perhaps most important was the dignity he conferred upon wives. Even though "by divine appointment, the responsibility to preside



in the home rests upon the priesthood holder," he stated: "A man who holds the priesthood accepts his wife as a partner in the leadership of the home and family with full knowledge of and full participation in all decisions relating thereto. . . . For a man to operate independent of or without regard to the feelings and counsel of his wife in governing the family is to exercise unrighteous dominion."

President Hunter also denounced "any domineering, indecent, or uncontrolled" sexual behavior, rebuked "any man who abuses or demeans his wife physically or spiritually," and reminded: "Sexual abuse of children has long been a cause for excommunication from the Church."

On the subject of married women working, he reiterated a familiar message: "No man can shift the burden of responsibility [of earning the living] to another, not even to his wife. . . . We urge you to do all in your power to allow your wife to remain in the home, caring for the children while you provide for the family the best you can." He warned divorced fathers that their temple eligibility would be jeopardized if they neglected child support.<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps the most disquieting message to women from President Hunter was an interview with the *Los Angeles Times* in mid-October 1994:

Q: There have been occasions in the past when some churches have recanted certain teachings. Galileo comes to mind . . . Is it possible in light of continuing revelation that the Mormon Church may change its opposition to women in the priesthood?

Hunter: At the present time there isn't an avenue of ever changing. It's too well defined by revelation, by Scripture. And we follow strictly the scriptural passageway in matters of that kind. I see nothing that will lead to a change of direction at the present time—or in the future.<sup>26</sup>


#### "COMING BACK/GOING ON"

**I**T was impossible for me to read or hear President Hunter's addresses in any way other than the personal. I am probably a source of offense to some leaders of the Church, just as some of them have injured and hurt me. Am I wrong to take these messages and their revisions personally? I have described the ways in which I feel President Hunter's inaugural message has been edited, altered, and eroded in subsequent iterations. I suspect that at least some of the changes were motivated by the fear that the original statements might give a shred of aid and comfort to those well-known enemies of the Church—gays, feminists, and intellectuals. Yet it is possible that the increasing chilliness in the invitation to come back, the insistence on high standards, and the qualifications of the invitation to the temple were not really aimed at people like me. Now that President Hunter's mortal ministry is over, we cannot know the directions he would have taken, given more time.

But I'm a reader, an editor, and a writer. Taking words seriously is what I do. And the struggle to see how a message may apply to me was also part of taking President Hunter seriously

as the Lord's prophet during the time he was with us. Those messages continue to be a source of inspiration to me. I find in them an invitation to continue searching my soul for anger, pride, and other unworthy motivations; simultaneously, I find in them great consolation, boundless mercy, and grace-filled healing. President Hunter inspired us with breathtaking and stunning vision of the Savior's redemptive power. He painted a sweeping picture of the gospel as inclusive and of Christ as the exemplar for each individual. He called us to the Christ-like life with a power and a passion and a tenderness that will, I believe, have a permanent effect on the Church. He reawakened the noblest powers in Mormonism, powers which can, not immediately but ultimately, I believe, redress the current imbalance between individual and institutional authority, renew trust that the glory of God is intelligence, affirm that the truth of the gospel has nothing to fear from the truths of other spheres, dissolve the insistence on women's inferiority, eliminate the charter many ecclesiastical leaders feel they have to dominate members, empower members to contribute without defensiveness and defend themselves when such abuses occur, call our attention to the principles of grace and charity, and reenthroned conscience, rather than conformity, as the channel by which members know they are pleasing God.

I do not know how long it will be before my testimony of the gospel and my obedience to my covenants will be seen as more important than my thinking, speaking, and writing. But I cling to what I do know.

I know that Howard W. Hunter was the inspired successor to Joseph Smith, and that he has, in turn, been succeeded by Gordon B. Hinckley as an equally legitimate prophet and president. I love this Church. I accept its priesthood authority, and I accept the divinity of its message. I believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God. And underlying all of this is my profound knowledge that our Heavenly Parents live, that they love us, that they hear our prayers, that they cherish us as individuals, that they sorrow with us in our grief and over our errors, and that they rejoice with us as we use our agency to grow in wisdom and in love. I know that Jesus Christ is my Savior and Redeemer. I have felt the power of the Atonement in my life, and I know that the depth of love I feel for him is only a shallow reflection of the love he feels for me. I am grateful to the good people in our ward who have continued to welcome me and my family, and I'm grateful for the peace and renewal I feel as I partake spiritually, though not physically, of the sacrament. My commitment is to maintain my covenants privately until I can once again make them in community. In keeping these covenants, I will be strengthened by President Hunter's luminous and loving vision of a Christ-centered life. 

#### NOTES

1. Quoted in full in Jay M. Todd, "President Howard W. Hunter: Fourteenth President of the Church," *Ensign*, July 1994, 4–5; printed as the first An Olive Leaf section, "More Humility and Patience and Forgiveness," in *SUNSTONE*, September 1994, 88; "I Pledge My Life and . . . Full Measure of My Soul," *LDS Church News*, 11 June 1994, 3, 14.

2. President Hunter did not speak in October 1980 (he was still recuperating from a June heart attack) or October 1993 (he was recuperating from gall bladder surgery).

3. Hunter, "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee," *Ensign*, May 1993, 64, 65.

4. D. Michael Quinn, "The LDS Church's Campaign against the Equal Rights Amendment," *Journal of Mormon History* 20:2 (fall 1994), 97-98.

5. See Jan Shipp, "The Difficult Problem of Maintaining Balance between Center and Periphery in an Expanding Church," address given at the 1994 Sunstone Symposium (tape order #SL94-390).

6. Mike Cannon, "Members Encouraged to Attend Temple," *LDS Church News*, 24 Sept. 1994, 4; "Pres. Hunter's Admonition: Let Lives Reflect the Gospel," *LDS Church News*, 17 December 1994, 4. In priesthood meeting, he briefly reminded men that Church officers could and would use the granting of temple recommends to enforce paternal responsibilities.

7. High councilors in my stake spoke in January 1995 about attending the temple more often, referring often (though without quoting) to President Hunter's invitation. The gentle and positive spirit of President Hunter's invitation was subsumed in the all-too-familiar techniques of sports metaphors by one ("Go for the gold. Go for the celestial kingdom") and guilt by the other ("Here you are seventeen blocks from the temple, so why don't you go—and if you go already, why don't you go oftener?"). One speaker reported that as of November 1994, our stake had 1,283 nonendowed adults and 1,384 endowed adults. Of those endowed, 731 (52 percent) do not hold current recommends. (David Betzer and Larry Garske [Wells Stake high councilors], addresses, Whittier Ward sacrament meeting, 15 January 1995, notes in my possession.)

8. "An Invitation to Come Back," *LDS Church News*, 22 Dec. 1985, 3. Elder Richard G. Scott, in 1986, speaking to inactive members, said, "I plead, come back. Come back to the cool, refreshing waters of personal purity. Come back to the warmth and security of your Father in Heaven's love. Come back to the serenity that distills from the decision to live the commandments of . . . Jesus the Christ." (Richard G. Scott, "We Love You—Please Come Back," *Ensign*, May 1986, 10-12.) Six months later, Elder F. Burton Howard urged "the less active, the critics, the uncommitted, and the rebellious . . . to come back to the Lord." (F. Burton Howard, "Come Back to the Lord," *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 76-78.) Apostle Marvin J. Ashton gave the first message directed at members who had been disciplined in 1988: "My plea and invitation to all, especially to those who have temporarily lost certain privileges, is come back. Your lives are as important to us as

they should be to you." (Marvin J. Ashton, "While They Are Waiting," *Ensign*, May 1988, 62-64.) Elder Adney Y. Komatsu, in 1992, also "invite[d] all to come unto Christ. Come back, and partake of His joy." (Adney Y. Komatsu, "Please Hear the Call!" *Ensign*, May 1992, 29-31.)

9. Hunter, "Of the World or of the Kingdom?" *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 56.

10. Hunter, "Am I a 'Living' Member?" *Ensign*, May 1987, 16.

11. Hunter, "Commitment to God," *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 58.

12. Hunter, "True Religion," *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 12.

13. Hunter, "Standing As Witnesses of God," *Ensign*, May 1990, 60.

14. Hunter, "Where, Then, Is Hope?" *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1970, 115-16.

15. Hunter, "That We May Be One," *Ensign*, May 1976, 105-06.

16. "Pres. Hunter's Admonition: Let Lives Reflect the Gospel," *LDS Church News*, 17 Dec. 1994, 4.

17. Hunter, "Gospel Imperatives," in Howard W. Hunter, *That We Might Have Joy* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1994), 136-37; Hunter, "Master, the Tempest Is Raging," *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 33-35; and "A More Excellent Way," *Ensign*, May 1992, 61-63.

18. Hunter, "The Opening and Closing of Doors," *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 60.

19. Hunter, "Prepare for Honorable Employment," *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 124.

20. Eleanor Knowles, *Howard W. Hunter* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 89.

21. Hunter, "To the Women of the Church," *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 95-97; and "Stand Firm in the Faith," *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 96-97.

22. Hunter, "To the Women of the Church," *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 97.

23. Elder Hunter also omitted from the later version a rather sentimental and anonymous poem of Victorian tone about a woman's sphere. The poem is weak (for literary reasons rather than because of its content), and its omission improved the address, in my opinion. It read: "They talk about a woman's sphere, / As though it has a limit; / There's not a place in earth or heaven, / There's not a task to mankind given, / There's not a blessing nor a woe, / There's not a whispered yes or no, / There's not a life, or death, or birth, / That has a feather's weight of worth / . . . Without a woman in it."

24. Hunter, "Being a Righteous Husband and Father," *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 49-51.

25. Hunter, "Follow the Son of God," *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 87-88.

26. "Leader of Mormons Reaffirms Primacy of Church Teachings," *Los Angeles Times*, 22 Oct. 1994, B-1, 5.

## Speeches of Howard W. Hunter, 1959-94

*These eighty-two addresses were given in general conferences unless otherwise noted.*

*The addresses given since April 1990 are significantly focused on the importance of a Christ-like life.*

### October 1959. "What Is in My Heart,"

*Improvement Era*, December 1959, 962. In this, his first address as a general authority, Elder Hunter expressed love for President McKay and counselors, provided some biographical background, and affirmed: "I want you to know that I have a firm, uncompromising conviction that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that the gospel was restored in this latter dispensation by the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph Smith. I have an abiding conviction of the truthfulness of this fact and that our President . . . holds those same keys, powers, and authority. . . . I accept without reservation the call."

### April 1960. "Church of the Air Sermon,"

*Conference Report*, 124-26. (He did not speak in a general conference session that season.) "The Christian family gets its unity and stability, not by outward regulation, but by the natural processes of its inward life. . . . [The] family council teaches mutual respect for each other, eliminates selfishness, and emphasizes the Golden Rule in the home and living a clean life. . . . The world would be a better place to live if we would think and act as God would have us do."

### October 1960. "Secretly a Disciple?"

*Improvement Era*, December 1960, 948-49. Joseph of Arimathea, "secretly a disciple . . . would not lift a finger to condemn the Savior, nor would he defend him openly. . . . Secret followers of Jesus and half-hearted lukewarm Christians . . . are almost in the same category as those who are antagonistic. . . . We have more respect for one who honestly doubts than for one who fears to declare loyalty."

### April 1961. "Put Your Hand to the Plow,"

*Improvement Era*, June 1961, 398-99. He quoted Luke 9:62 ("No man, having put his hand to the plough. . . ."). "To disturb the conventional, to overturn the traditional, or to attempt to make changes in the deep-rooted way of doing things in the lives of individuals, requires toil and sweat. . . . We have in Church leadership great plowmen with firm hands and stout hearts—stake presidents and mission presidents—determined men. . . . As plowing requires an eye intent on the furrow to be made and is marred when one looks backward, so will they come short of exaltation who prosecute the work of God with a distracted attention or a divided heart."

### October 1961. "An Everyday Religion,"

*Improvement Era*, December 1961, 962-63. "Religion can be part of our daily work, our business, our buying and selling, building, transportation, manufacturing, our trade or profession, or of anything we do. . . . [The Lord] makes no distinction between temporal and spiritual commandments. . . . Mortality is just one part of our eternal life."

### April 1962. "An Understanding Heart,"

*Improvement Era*, June 1962, 442-43. Solomon did not ask for a long life of wealth (like Midas) or power over his enemies, "but a spiritual gift—an understanding heart. . . . If the Lord was pleased because of that which Solomon had asked of him, surely he would be pleased with each of us if we had the desire to acquire an understanding heart. . . . An understanding heart results from the experiences we have in life if we keep the commandments."

### October 1962. "To Believe Is to See,"

*Improvement Era*, December 1962, 914-15. "Those who lose or lack faith, live in the past—there is a loss of hope for the future. What a great change comes into the life of one who finds an abiding faith to give assurance. . . . The blind man



*"Our ideas may not always be quite like those who preside in authority over us, but this is the Lord's church and he will bless each of us as we cast off pride, pray for strength, and contribute to the good of the whole." (April 1976)*

believed and was permitted to see. Thomas refused to believe until after he could see."

**April 1963. "Evidences of the Resurrection,"** *Improvement Era*, June 1963, 512-13. "We can come to only one conclusion, the resurrection is a historical fact amply proved by authenticated documentary evidence and the testimony of competent witnesses."

**October 1963. "Prophets in This Dispensation,"** *Improvement Era*, December 1963, 1098-1100. "To peoples of past dispensations and ages, the most important prophet was the one then living, teaching, and revealing the will of the Lord in their time. . . . It is the present living prophet who is our leader, our teacher. It is from him we take direction in the modern world."

**April 1964. "The Windows of Heaven,"** *Improvement Era*, June 1964, 475-77. "If tithing is a voluntary matter, is it gift or a payment of an obligation? There is a substantial difference between the two. A gift is a voluntary transfer of money or property without consideration. . . . If tithing is a gift, we could give whatever we please, when we please, or make no gift at all. It would place our Heavenly Father in the very same category as the street beggar to whom we might toss a coin in passing."

**October 1964. "The Road to Damascus,"** *Improvement Era*, December 1964, 1086-88. "Paul's life had been bisected by Damascus Road. Before, he was an aggressive persecutor of Christianity, but after Damascus Road he was one of its most fervent propagators. There are many men in the world who could be like Paul, men who could be changed in the twinkling of an eye if willing to change the object of their lives as did Paul."

**April 1965. "And God Spake All These Words. . . ,"** *Improvement Era*, June 1965, 510-11. "He loves the Lord with all his heart who loves nothing in comparison of him, and nothing but in reference to him, who is ready to give up, do, or suffer anything in order to please and glorify him. He loves God with all his soul, or rather with all his life, who is ready to give up life for his sake and to be deprived of the comforts of the world to glorify him. He loves God with all his strength who exerts all the powers of his body and soul in the service of God. He loves God with all his mind who applies himself only to know God and his will, who sees God in all things and acknowledges him in all ways."

**October 1965. "Organization of the Church of Christ,"** *Improvement Era*, December 1965, 1145-47. The organization of Christ's church comprises apostles, seventies, bishops, and so forth. Elder Hunter comments that modern churches lack this organization, affirms the importance of apostolic succession, and testifies that the modern church has the same organization as the primitive church.

**April 1966. "Motivations for Good: Fear, Duty, Love,"** *Improvement Era*, December 1965, 1145-47. "There has never been a time when man has been forced to do good or forced to obey the commandments of God. He has always been given his free choice—his free moral agency. If one looks back through . . . history, there come into view the results of the greatness of men who kept the commandments of the Lord and made the choice on his side. One also sees strewn along the wayside the ruins that stand as silent reminders of those who chose otherwise. Both had their free moral agency."

**September 1966. "Where Is Peace?"** *Improvement Era*, December 1966, 1104-5. He describes the irony of a student demonstration in which placards proclaimed: "We demand peace." "There is no promise of peace to those who reject God, to those who will not keep his commandments, or to those who violate his law. . . . Peace can come to an individual only by an unconditional surrender—surrender to him who is the Prince of peace, who has the power to confer peace . . . one may be in the midst of utter destruction and the bloodshed of war and yet have the serenity of unspeakable peace."

**April 1967. "Gospel Imperatives,"** *Improvement Era*, June 1967, 101-3. "The gospel of Jesus Christ is not just a gospel of belief; it is a plan of action. His gospel is a gospel of imperatives, and the very nature of its substance is a call to action. He did not say, 'Observe my gospel,' he said, 'Live it!' He did not say, 'Note its beautiful structure and imagery,' he said, 'Go, do, see, feel, give, believe!' The gospel of Jesus Christ is full of imperatives, words that call for personal commitment and action—obligatory, binding, compulsory."

**September 1967. "Is a Church Necessary?,"** *Improvement Era*, December 1967, 44, 46-47. "I submit that the church of Jesus Christ is as necessary in the lives of men and women today as it was when established by him, not by passive interest or a profession of faith, but by an assumption of active responsibility. In this way the Church brings us out of darkness of an isolated life into the light of the gospel, where belief is turned into doing, according to the admonitions of scripture. This is the hope of the individual, the family, the Church, the nations of the earth."

**April 1968. "We Owe Allegiance to Sovereignty,"** *Improvement Era*, June 1968, 79-81. Religious people "owe fealty to two separate monarchs" and "have allegiance to two separate and distinct sovereign powers"—the laws of their nation and the laws of God. "This is a day when civil disobedience seems to be prevalent and even advocated from some pulpits, but the position of this Church and its teachings is clear . . . My knowledge of these [divine] truths moves

me to allegiance to divine sovereignty, also to sustain the law of the land."

**October 1968. "Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen,"** *Improvement Era*, December 1968, 105-8. "Modernists deny the virgin birth, . . . dispute that the Master voluntarily offered himself to atone for the sins of mankind, . . . deny the fact that Jesus rose from the tomb, . . . [and] the fact of his ascension . . . To those who have faith in him is given the right or the authority to become the sons of God. . . . There is a bigger faith than one which comes from seeing and hearing, a faith that can dispense with tangible proof and visible evidence. It is the faith that comes from reliance upon the word of the Lord."

**April 1969. "The Reality of the Resurrection,"** *Improvement Era*, June 1969, 106-7. "We believe in the literal resurrection of the body, reunited with the spirit, becoming the spiritual body or the soul as defined by scripture. If we should eliminate from our religious beliefs the doctrine of the atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of mankind, there would be nothing left but a code of ethics. . . . In a society of turmoil, immorality, freethinking, and questioning of the reality of God, we reach out for the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ—the gospel which gives to us comfort, hope, a desire for righteousness, and peace in one's heart."

**October 1969. "Ethics Alone Is Not Sufficient,"** *Improvement Era*, December 1969, 96-97. "There is a distinction between one whose life is based on mere ethics and one who lives a truly religious life. We have a need for ethics, but true religion includes the truths of ethics and goes far beyond. . . . For the same reason man cannot be saved by bread alone, he cannot be saved by a code of ethics."

**April 1970. "The Reality of God,"** *Improvement Era*, June 1970, 33-35. "To find God as a reality, we must follow the course which he pointed out for the quest. The path is one that leads upward; it takes faith and effort, and it is not the easy course. . . . Many men will not devote themselves to the arduous task of proving to themselves the reality of God."

**October 1970. "Where, Then, Is Hope?"** *Improvement Era*, December 1970, 115-16. "In this world of confusion and rushing, temporal progress, we need to return to the simplicity of Christ. We need to love, honor, and worship him. To acquire spirituality and have its influence in our lives, we cannot become confused and misdirected by the twisted teachings of the modernist. One of the great strengths of the Mormon religion is this translation of belief into daily thinking and conduct. This replaces turmoil and confusion with peace and tranquility."

**April 1971. "Prepare Every Needful Thing,"** *Ensign*, June 1971, 51-52. Elder Hunter describes the function of the meetinghouse library. The Church has a scriptural responsibility to teach the gospel, and the commandment to "prepare every needful thing" provides the scriptural justification for creating visual aids.

**October 1971. "Elijah the Prophet,"** *Ensign*, December 1971, 70-72. Elijah's life and prophetic mission were centered on recalling Israel to obedience to God and included such memorable events as his contest with the false "prophets of Baal," his courageous opposition to the unrighteous King Ahab, his taking refuge with the starving widow whose faith was rewarded by an unending supply of flour and oil, and his





*"True religion consists not only in refraining from evil (that is, remaining unspotted), but in deliberately and purposefully doing acts of kindness and service to others." (October 1978)*

miraculous ascension to heaven. To this Old Testament record, Latter-day Saints can add his return to earth to bestow special priesthood keys on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland temple.

**April 1972. "A Teacher,"** *Ensign*, July 1972, 85. A fledgling watched a larger bird thump his feet, cock his head, pull up a worm, and swallow it. The little bird hopped on the lawn, thumped its feet, cocked its head, and pulled up a worm of his own. "God bless the good people who teach our children and our youth."

**October 1972. "Spiritual Famine,"** *Ensign*, January 1973, 64-65. The Church offers the blessing of spiritual authority to members in modern times. "In what appears to be a spiritual famine, there are many who have found a spiritual abundance."

**April 1973. "This Is My Gospel,"** *Ensign*, July 1973, 118-21. When Christ appeared to the Nephites, he preached the gospel to them and organized his church among them. "An analysis divides the gospel plan into two parts: First, that which is preparatory and administered under the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood. . . . Second, the fullness of the gospel administered by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood. . . . The pathway of the preparatory gospel for the forgiveness of sins and entrance to the kingdom is clearly marked. The way is pointed out for the fullness of the everlasting gospel to be enjoyed by man, blessed by the Spirit of the Holy Ghost, to so live as to obtain a knowledge of God and receive his approbation upon resurrection."

**October 1973. "Of the World or of the Kingdom?"** *Ensign*, January 1974, 53-56. "In this day of increased knowledge, higher thought, and a modernization of the old, the simple has been overlooked and the profound sought after. The basic, simple, fundamental truths of the gospel are being ignored."

**April 1974. "His Final Hours,"** May 1974, 17-19. "In contrast to the haste and busy affairs of our day, [Christ's] life was one of simplicity. He lived in humble circumstances. He had not surrounded himself with the proud and mighty of the earth, but with the poor, the humble, and those of modest circumstances. There was nothing complicated about his life or teaching. . . . As we now enter the Passover week of old, may we think on the resurrected Christ, the living Son of the living God. May we, in his name, unite our hearts, love one another, and keep his commandments."

**October 1974. "To Know God,"** *Ensign*, November 1974, 96-97. "Science has done marvelous things for man, but it cannot accomplish the things he must do for himself, the greatest of which is to find the reality of God. The task is not easy; the labor is not light; but . . . 'great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory.'"

**April 1975. "Faith—The First Step,"** *Ensign*, May 1975, 37-39. "The first step is faith, not just faith in general but a specific faith—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. To know whether or not Jesus Christ is a reality, or if it is true that he is the Son of God and came to earth, . . . there must arise within one's soul a genuine desire to gain a knowledge of the truth."

**October 1975. "The Tabernacle,"** *Ensign*, November 1975, 94-96. On the centennial of the Salt Lake Tabernacle's dedication, Elder Hunter praised: "The hard work and labor and the sacrifice of worldly possessions by those early pioneers participating in [the Tabernacle's] construction have brought blessings to the many hundreds of thousands who have come here or who have listened to the music and spoken word."

**October 1975. "Prepare for Honorable Employment,"** *Ensign*, November 1975, 112-24. "There are impelling reasons for our sisters to plan toward employment also. We want them to obtain all the education and vocational training possible before marriage. If they become widowed or divorced and need to work, we want them to have dignified and rewarding employment. If a sister does not marry, she has every right to engage in a profession that allows her to magnify her talents and gifts."

**April 1976. "That We May Be One,"** *Ensign*, May 1976, 105-6. "These great purposes of the Lord could not have been achieved with dissension or jealousy or selfishness. Our ideas may not always be quite like those who preside in authority over us, but this is the Lord's church and he will bless each of us as we cast off pride, pray for strength, and contribute to the good of the whole."

**October 1976. "The Temptations of Christ,"** *Ensign*, November 1976, 17-19. "The surest way to lose the blessings of time or eternity is to accept them on Satan's terms. . . . Will we resist [temptation]? . . . Satan may have lost Jesus, but he does not believe he has lost us. He continues to tempt, taunt, and plead for our loyalty. We should take strength for this battle from the fact that Christ was victorious not as a God but as a man."

**April 1977. "Thoughts on the Sacrament,"** *Ensign*, May 1977, 24-25. "To make a covenant with the Lord to always keep His commandments is a serious obligation, and to renew that covenant by partaking of the sacrament is equally serious. The solemn moments of thought while the sacrament is being served have great significance. They are moments of self-examination, introspection, self-discernment—a time to reflect and to resolve."

**October 1977. "Hallowed Be Thy Name,"** *Ensign*, November 1977, 52-54. "If prayer is only a spasmodic cry at the time of crisis, then it is utterly selfish, and we come to think of God as a repairman or a service agency to help us only in our

emergencies. We should remember the Most High day and night—always—not only at times when all other assistance has failed and we desperately need help. If there is any element in human life on which we have a record of miraculous success and inestimable worth to the human soul, it is prayer, reverential, devout communication with our Heavenly Father."

**May 1978. "Bind on Thy Sandals,"** *Ensign* May 1978, 34-35. Speaking at the priesthood session, Elder Hunter said: "As surely as I know anything, I know you young men are needed and will be called on to help the kingdom in the years ahead. Indeed, we call upon you now. We need your company and your friendship and your service and your standards."

**October 1978. "True Religion,"** *Ensign*, November 1978, 11-13. "True religion is a devotion to God, demonstrated by love and compassion for fellowmen, coupled with unworldliness. Such a statement seems too simple to be sufficient, but in its simplicity it speaks an important truth. Restated it may be said that true religion consists not only in refraining from evil (that is, remaining unspotted), but in deliberately and purposefully doing acts of kindness and service to others."

**4 February 1979. "All Are Alike unto God,"** *Ensign*, June 1979, 72-74. (BYU 14-stake fireside.) "As members of the Lord's church, we need to lift our vision beyond personal prejudices. We need to discover the supreme truth that indeed our Father is no respecter of persons. . . . The Church has an interest in all of Abraham's descendants, and we should remember that the history of the Arabs goes back to Abraham through his son Ishmael."

**April 1979. "Developing Spirituality,"** *Ensign*, May 1979, 24-26. "Developing spirituality and attuning ourselves to the highest influences of godliness is not an easy matter. It takes time and frequently involves a struggle. It will not happen by chance, but is accomplished only through deliberate effort and by calling upon God and keeping his commandments."

**October 1979. "Reading the Scriptures,"** *Ensign*, November 1979, 64-66. "Whatever Jesus lays his hands upon lives. If Jesus lays his hands upon a marriage, it lives. If he is allowed to lay his hands on the family, it lives. . . . When they got to the home of the ruler of the synagogue, Jesus took the little girl by the hand and raised her from the dead. In like manner, he will lift and raise every man to a new and better life who will permit the Savior to take him by the hand."

**April 1980. "God Will Have a Tried People,"** *Ensign*, May 1980, 24-26. "We came to mortal life to encounter resistance. It was part of the plan for our eternal progress."

**October 1980.** Elder Hunter did not speak.

**April 5, 1981. "No Man Shall Add to or Take Away,"** *Ensign*, May 1981, 65-66. Explaining that he had received a letter from "a young friend in the mission field" who was perplexed about how to answer the stricture against "add[ing] unto these things" in Revelation 22:18-19, he gave a series of explanations and added: "A study of the revelations of the Lord in holy writ confirms the fact that it is continuous revelation that guides prophets and the church in any age."

**October 1981. "Conference Time,"** *Ensign*, November 1981, 12-13. "We are reminded as we participate in conference of the deep commitment we have to our fellowmen, our brothers and sis-

ters throughout the world. It is a commitment to share with them a gift that has come to us and the greatest gift we could give to them—an understanding of the fulness of the gospel. . . . We who are met here today claim a special, unique knowledge of the Savior's gospel. Most striking of all, to those who first become acquainted with us, is our declaration to the world that we are guided by a living prophet of God—one who communicates with, is inspired by, and receives revelation from the Lord."

**April 1982. "True Greatness,"** *Ensign*, May 1982, 19–20. True greatness "always requires regular, consistent, small, and sometimes ordinary and mundane steps over a long period of time. . . . We have an unlimited number of opportunities to do the many simple and minor things that will ultimately make us great."

**October 1982. "Commitment to God,"** *Ensign*, November 1982, 57–58. "Surely the Lord loves, more than anything else, an unwavering determination to obey his counsel. Surely the experiences of the great prophets of the Old Testament have been recorded to help us understand the importance of choosing the path of strict obedience. How pleased the Lord must have been when Abraham . . . did as he was instructed, without question and without wavering."

**April 1983. "Evidences of the Resurrection,"** *Ensign*, May 1983, 15–16. "It is truly a beautiful message—there will be life after death, we can return to live with our Father in Heaven once again, because of the sacrifice the Savior has made for us, and because of our own repentance and obedience to the commandments."

**October 1983. "Parents' Concern for Children,"** *Ensign*, November 1983, 63–64. "A successful parent is one who has loved, one who has sacrificed, and one who has cared for, taught, and ministered to the needs of a child. If you have done all of these and our child is still wayward or troublesome or worldly, it could well be that you are, nevertheless, a successful parent."

**April 1984. "The Pharisee and the Publican,"** *Ensign*, May 1984, 64–66. "Humility is an attribute of godliness possessed by true Saints. It is easy to understand why a proud man fails. He is content to rely upon himself only. This is evident in those who seek social position or who push others aside to gain position in fields of business, government, education, sports, or other endeavors. Our genuine concern should be for the success of others."

**November 1984. "Master, the Tempest Is Raging,"** *Ensign*, November 1984, 33–35. "We will all have some adversity in our lives. I think we can be reasonably sure of that. Some of it will have the potential to be violent and damaging and destructive. Some of it may even strain our faith in a loving God who has the power to administer relief in our behalf. To those anxieties I think the Father of us all would say, 'Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?' And, of course, that has to be faith for the whole journey, the entire experience, the fulness of our life."

**April 1985. "Christ, Our Passover,"** *Ensign*, May 1985, 17–19. "The Savior instituted the ordinance now known as the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. With the suffering of Gethsemane, the sacrifice of Calvary, and the resurrection from a garden tomb, Jesus fulfilled the ancient law and ushered in a new dispensation based on a higher, holier understanding of the law of sacrifice. . . . This is the majesty of the Atonement and



*"God's chief way of acting is by persuasion and patience and long-suffering, not by coercion and stark confrontation. He acts by gentle solicitation and by sweet enticement. He always acts with unfailing respect for the freedom and independence that we possess." (October 1989)*

Resurrection, not just a passover from death, but a gift of eternal life by an infinite sacrifice."

**October 1985. "Fast Day,"** *Ensign*, 1984, 72–74. After summarizing the history of fasting from the Old and New Testaments and the early Church, Elder Hunter explained that its purpose is to "set aside the temporal so that we might enjoy the higher qualities of the spiritual."

**April 1986. "An Apostle's Witness of the Resurrection,"** *Ensign*, May 1986, 15–17. "Without the Resurrection, the gospel of Jesus Christ becomes a litany of wise sayings and seemingly unexplainable miracles—but sayings and miracles with no ultimate triumph. No, the ultimate triumph is in the ultimate miracle: for the first time in the history of mankind, one who was dead raised himself into living immortality. He was the Son of God, the Son of our immortal Father in Heaven, and his triumph over physical and spiritual death is the good news every Christian tongue should speak."

**October 1986. "The Lord's Touchstone,"** *Ensign*, November 1986, 34–35. "I suggest to you that the Lord has prepared a touchstone for you and me, an outward measurement of inward discipleship that marks our faithfulness and will survive the fires yet to come. . . . The key is to love our neighbor, including the neighbor that is difficult to love."

**April 1987. "Am I a 'Living' Member?"** *Ensign*, May 1987, 16–18. "[Being a living member] means that we now and always will love God and our neighbors as ourselves. It means our actions will reflect who we are and what we believe. It means that we are every day Christians, walking as Christ would have us walk."

**October 1987. "The Opening and Closing of Doors,"** *Ensign*, November 1987, 54, 59–60. "From out of the dark, damp confinement of Liberty Jail, the Prophet Joseph Smith learned that if we are called to pass through tribulation, it is for our growth and experience and will ultimately be counted for our good. . . . Where one door shuts, another opens, even for a prophet in prison."

**April 1988. "He Is Risen,"** *Ensign*, May 1988, 16–17. "When [Christ's] body was taken from the cross and hastily placed in a borrowed tomb, he, the sinless son of God, had already taken upon him not only the sins and temptations of every human soul who will repent, but all of our sickness and grief and pain of every kind. He suffered these afflictions as we suffer them, according to the flesh. He suffered them all. He did this to perfect his mercy and his ability to lift us above every earthly trial."

**October 1988. "Blessed from on High,"** *Ensign*, November 1988, 59–61. "Perhaps no promise in life is more reassuring than that promise of divine assistance and spiritual guidance in times of need.

It is a gift freely given from heaven, a gift that we need from our earliest youth through the very latest days of our lives."

**February 1989. "The Church Is for All People,"** *Ensign*, November 1989, 75–77. (Address to singles at satellite fireside.) "The Church is for all members. In acknowledging the single or married state of individual church members, we hope we are not misunderstood, for our intent is not to stereotype them. All of us, single or married, have individual identities and needs, among which is the desire to be seen as a worthwhile individual child of God."

**April 1989. "The God That Doest Wonders,"** *Ensign*, May 1989, 15–17. "We will live better and love more if we will remember . . . we are miracles in our own right, every one of us, and the resurrected Son of God is the greatest miracle of all."

**October 1989. "The Golden Thread of Choice,"** *Ensign*, November 1989, 17–18. "It is imperative that we understand that God's chief way of acting is by persuasion and patience and long-suffering, not by coercion and stark confrontation. He acts by gentle solicitation and by sweet enticement. He always acts with unfailing respect for the freedom and independence that we possess. He wants to help us and pleads for the chance to assist us, but he will not do so in violation of our agency."

**April 1990. "Standing As Witnesses of God,"** *Ensign*, May 1990, 60–62. Elder Hunter stressed "one place in society where that strength and commitment must be shown if we are to survive as a nation, as a people, or even as a fully successful Church. We simply must have love and integrity and strong principles in our homes. We must have an abiding commitment to marriage and children and morality. We must succeed where success counts most for the next generation."

**October 1990. "Come unto Me,"** *Ensign*, November 1990, 17–18. "Here is the promise of personal peace and protection. Here is the power to remit sin in all periods of time. We, too, must believe that Jesus Christ possesses the power to ease our burdens and lighten our loads. We, too, must come unto him and there receive rest from our labors."

**April 1991. "The Sixth Day of April, 1830,"** *Ensign*, May 1991, 63–65. "Joseph Smith was not only a great man, but he was an inspired servant of the Lord, a prophet of God. His greatness consists in one thing—the truthfulness of his declaration that he saw the Father and the Son and that he responded to the reality of that divine revelation."

**October 1991. "The Gospel—A Global Faith,"** *Ensign*, November 1991, 18–19. "As members of the church of Jesus Christ, we seek to bring all truth together. We seek to enlarge that circle of

love and understanding among all the people of the earth. Thus we strive to establish peace and happiness, not only within Christianity but among all mankind. The validity, the power, of our faith is not bound by history, nationality, or culture. It is not the peculiar property of any one person or any one age."

**April 1992.** "A More Excellent Way," *Ensign*, May 1992, 61-63. "When we feel the floods are threatening to drown us and the deep is going to swallow up the tossed vessel of our faith, I pray we may always hear amid the storm and the darkness that sweet utterance of the Savior of the world: 'Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.'" (Matt. 14:27.)

**April 1993.** "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee," *Ensign*, May 1993, 63-65. "How often do we think of the Savior? How deeply and how gratefully and how adoringly do we reflect on his life? How central to our lives do we know him to be? . . . Surely life would be more peaceful, surely marriages and families would be stronger, certainly neighborhoods and nations would be safer and kinder and more constructive if more of the gospel of Jesus Christ 'with sweetness' could fill our breasts."

**October 1993.** Elder Hunter did not speak.

**April 1994.** "What Manner of Men Ought Ye to Be?" *Ensign*, May 1994, 64. "Only Christ can be our ideal, our 'bright and morning star' (Rev. 22:16). Only he can say without any reservation, 'Follow me, learn of me, do the things you have seen me do. Drink of my water and eat of my bread. I am the way, the truth, and the life. I am the law and the light. Look unto me and ye shall live. Love one another as I have loved you.'"

**June 1994.** "The Pillars of Our Faith," *Ensign*, September 1994, 54-55. (Sacrament meeting address, Nauvoo Ward.) Elder Hunter identified four pillars: the First Vision, the Book of Mormon, the restoration of "the sacred and holy priesthood," and the temple and its ordinances. "May we each live our lives in such a way as to be worthy to receive a temple recommend and enter into the temple to provide opportunity for salvation for the dead and for the personal blessings of temple worship which will come into our lives."

**June 1994.** "The Temple of Nauvoo," *Ensign*, September 1994, 62-64. (Address at Nauvoo Temple site.) "As in Joseph's day, having worthy and endowed members is the key to building the kingdom in all the world. Temple worthiness ensures that our lives are in harmony with the will of the Lord, and we are attuned to receive His guidance in our lives."

**June 1994.** "Come to the God of All Truth," *Ensign*, September 1994, 72-73. (Satellite broadcast Sunday evening from Carthage, Illinois.) "This world needs the gospel of Jesus Christ as restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The gospel provides the only way the world will ever know peace. We need to be kinder with one another, more gentle, and more forgiving. We need to be slower to anger and more prompt to help. We need to extend the hand of fellowship and resist the hand of retribution."

**September 1994.** "He Invites Us to Follow Him," *Ensign* (First Presidency Message), September 1994, 2, 4-5. "The Lord's invitation to follow him is individual and personal, and . . . compelling. We cannot stand forever between two opinions. Each of us must at some time face the crucial question: 'Whom say ye that I am?' (Matt. 16:15). Our personal salvation depends on

our answer to that question and our commitment to that answer."

**September 1994.** "Stand Firm in the Faith," *Ensign*, November 1994, 96-97. (Address at the Relief Society general meeting, virtually identical to earlier address to that group, "To the Women of the Church," *Ensign*, November 1992, 95-97.) Elder Hunter expressed appreciation to the women for their service, pointed to the distresses of the world's turmoil, held up Christ as the answer to sorrow and confusion, and appealed to the women to "stand with and for the Brethren in stemming the tide of evil that surrounds us and in moving forward the work of our Savior."

**October 1994.** "Exceeding Great and Precious Promises," *Ensign*, November 1994, 7-9. "I bear solemn and grateful witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. Certainly he is the center of our worship and the key to our happiness. Let us follow the Son of God in all ways and all walks of life. Let us make him our exemplar and our guide."

**October 1994.** "Being a Righteous Husband and Father," *Ensign*, November 1994, 49-51. (Address at the general priesthood session.) "Men who abandon their family and fail to meet their responsibility to care for those they have fathered may find their eligibility for a temple recommend

and their standing in the Church in jeopardy. In cases of divorce or separation, men must demonstrate that they are meeting family support payments mandated by law and obligated by the principles of the Church in order to qualify for the blessings of the Lord."

**October 1994.** "Follow the Son of God," *Ensign*, November 1994, 87-88. (Address at closing session of general conference.) "All of our efforts in proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead lead to the holy temple. This is because the temple ordinances are absolutely crucial; we cannot attend to God's presence without them. I encourage everyone to worthily attend the temple or to work toward the day when you can enter that holy house to receive your ordinances and covenants."

**February 1995.** "A Temple-Motivated People," *Ensign*, February 1995, 2-5. Perhaps based on texts of addresses delivered at the dedications of the Orlando and Bountiful temples, this First Presidency message systematically describes temple ordinances (baptism for the dead, the endowment, celestial marriage), discusses Doctrine and Covenants 137 and 138 and their relevance to work for the dead, and urges temple-going Saints not to "lose a blessing by not seeking their own kindred dead as divinely directed by latter-day prophets."



## PRAYER IN A GARDEN

Moon floods the walled garden  
Of white lilies and blue sweet Williams,  
Making their petals translucent and transparent  
As the shroud draped about an unborn child's face.  
Mist gathers, then flows over the pond,  
Scatters beneath the low-hanging branches of fruit trees.  
I come here at night to search for the loveliest rose  
And make of it a sacrifice. Each petal is a word  
Given to the pond whose center is the round, full moon.  
When the last petal floats upon the lunar face,  
I send the final word of my prayer  
On the water, the mist, and the wind  
To whatever gods and goddesses will listen—  
Oh bring the souls of the faceless children  
I have heard laughing in the tall grass at dusk,  
Singing from the trees like thrushes at sunrise.  
Plant them in the walled garden of my flesh  
So that they may watch the light on white lilies,  
Run with the wind beneath the moon,  
Laugh in the tall grass at dusk  
At secrets that belong to us.

—CARA O'SULLIVAN



1993 Brookie & D. K. Brown Fiction Contest Moonstone Winner

# THE GLEDHILL FOOT AND THE REFLEXOLOGIST

By Pauline Mortensen

**Y**ES, THE FOOT IN THE SHAPE OF THE BODY. Everything corresponds. Don't I know it. I get a little head cold and it's all over my feet. Hay fever, stomachache, spine. I get a tooth that needs to be pulled, foot starts giving me fits right there. You can't tell me anything I don't already know about my feet.

You want me to put my sandals here on your rug? Nice rug. I've seen these before at the flea market. One of them Persian kind. I hear they let their goats root around on them. Makes them look antique for the tourists. Nice rug, though. I'll put my bag right here on top of my shoes.

Go ahead with what you were saying. The foot in the shape of the body. Everything corresponds. Don't I know it. Big toe corresponds to the head. Heel to pelvis. Horizontal and lateral lines all over the place.

You know, the chart is one thing, but fortunetelling is something else. A little bit of this leads to that. A little bit of that leads to something else. First thing you know some guy wants to predict your future by feeling around for the bumps on your head. Works his way up your leg right into the middle of next week. You get my drift. Nothing fishy. I'm a Mormon and I have my own beliefs. Just good, bona fide reflexology is all I ask.

One of the doctors I've been to before said he could read my history in my feet. Powerful vibrations he said I had. An ancient spirit, a noble soul. A little fringy, don't you think? I take it with a grain of salt. You can go ahead and have a look for yourself. I have all kinds of history.

Frankly, I like to keep an open mind, but I don't put too much stock in palm reading, Tarot cards, or astrology. Things like that. I don't believe in anything unless it's scientific. I just want you to take a look at my feet and see what you can do about this aching spot I got right above my left hip. Other problems as well, but I suppose you will be able to find that out for yourself.

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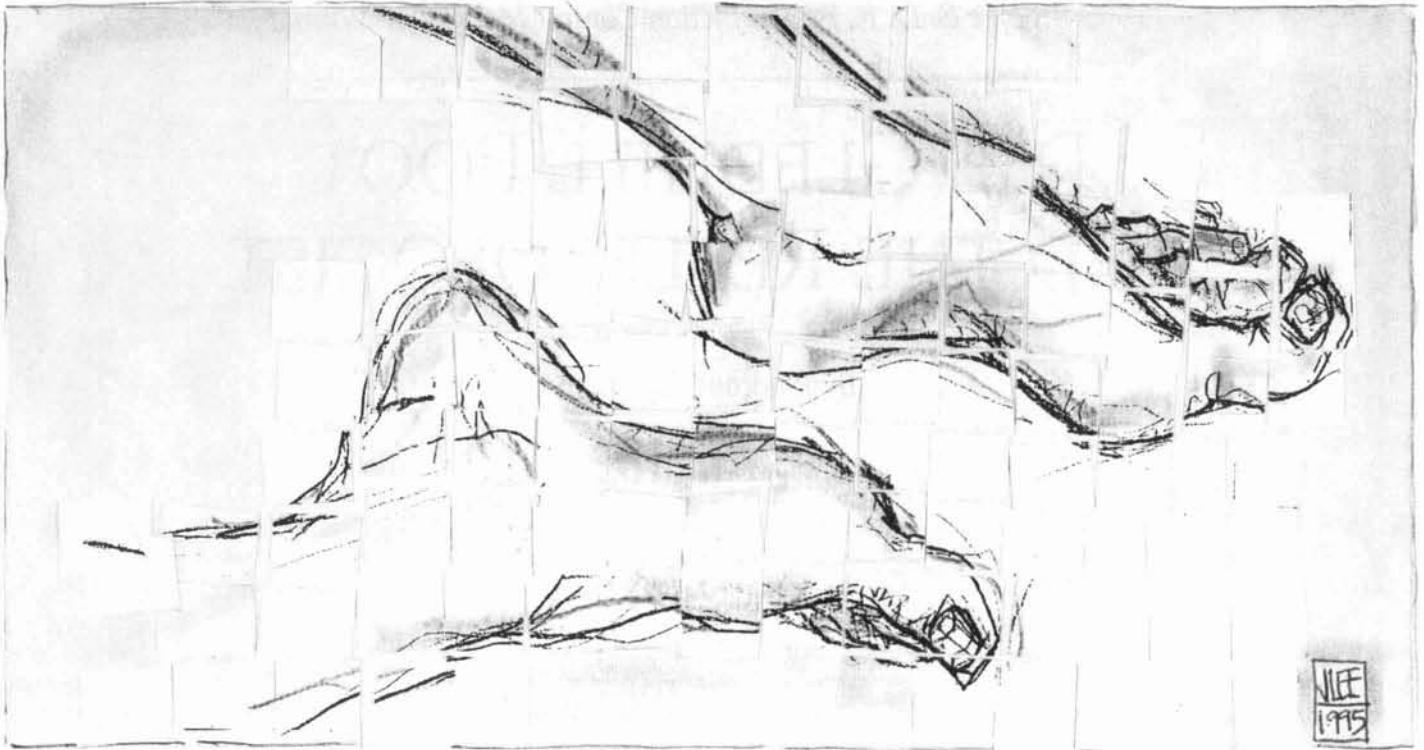
The water is fine. A little hot, maybe. The herbal cream I could get used to. Nice hands.

Of course, everyone tells me I have interesting feet. My ex-boyfriend, for instance. Good symmetry. Graceful arch. Delicate lines. Which accounts for my even disposition and winning smile. But I just say back, "You don't have to live with them." Gledhill feet on my mother's side. The curse of the family, if you know what I mean. Goes way back. High instep. Weak ankles. Brittle bones. My great-great-grandmother was one of the only members of the Mormon pioneers who rode all the way to Utah. A vibrant woman, nevertheless. Had thirteen children by three different husbands. Polygamists all. Survived everyone of them. My line comes directly through the first husband, second child. That was my mother's mother's mother. A direct line.

You always wash everybody's feet that way? Good idea. Nice strong soap. Herbal cream. You just can't be too careful now days. You never know when somebody is going to come in here and be contagious. Reminds me of the Last Supper. You know that picture. Nice cream. I'll just lay my other foot right here on this towel. It goes way back, you know. Gledhill foot on my grandmother's side? Grandmother Gledhill brought it in back in 1850-something. It's genetically transmitted through the women, you know. Like baldness. But it only affects the women. It is the burden we all have to bear. One time, just after they came to Utah, settled down there near Cedar City—cemetery there is full of Gledhills—they got surprised by Indians. Men out slapping together adobe. Indians come up by surprise. And there Great-Great-Grandmother Gledhill was, all alone and defenseless, sewing lace on a bureau scarf when one of them comes right through her door. One mean looking Indian with murder on his mind. He took one glance at the Gledhill foot and that's how the Indian blood came to be in our line. She brought that in too.

Yes, right there. Right there. You feel it? You feel my pain? I could tell you stories.

My aunt Darnella was the same way. Even after she put on weight, she'd just show a little bit of her ankle, and she had men all over her. Only woman I know who could wear cheap thongs and get away with it. Most women wouldn't dare. But I



*One of the doctors I've been to before said he could read my history in my feet. Powerful vibrations he said I had. An ancient spirit, a noble soul. A little fringy, don't you think?*

suppose you've seen all kinds. Good feet. Bad feet. All kinds.

It's none of my business, but do you always start with the big toe like that? Sometimes they start with the little one and work across. I was just wondering. Everybody's different. I had this one guy who liked to thump my foot with a mallet. You're not going to do any of that are you? I didn't think so.

So that's where I get all my pain. Direct from my Grandmother Gledhill on my mother's side. Did I mention that it skips a generation? It skipped my mother. Left her with two flat feet and a chest to match. I'm only kidding about the chest. All of us Gledhills are well endowed, don't you think?

Mother had the flat feet. Big flat feet. She could haul water for a half a mile and never get a blister. Not delicate like mine, temperamental. The only thing she ever wore was a laced up leather oxford. Big flat sole with chicken manure in the crease. Course I can wear shoes she never dreamed of. Heels or flat. Peek-a-boo or full form. I pay for it though, with my pain and all. But with my ankle it's worth the pain. Most women wouldn't dare wear the shoes that I wear. It's a matter of style. And style on some women doesn't mean a thing. Take sandals. I look real good in a sandal. You know those Mexican huaraches? Some women try to wear those. But they can't. They simply can't. But me, I can wear anything. Sandals, huaraches. Anything. A little piece of leather between. Sling backs. Toeless. Peasant.

Now if you're interested in pain, try that place just in slightly from my little toe. You can tell how much I've suffered

there. Yes, right there. I just got canned from my last job. It wasn't much of a job. Working for relatives. You know how that goes. They say they want you for one thing, and you end up doing something else. Aunt just older than me on my father's side. One of the skipped-over generation when it comes to feet. You ought to see her battleships. Strictly combat boot material. I never seen her in anything but a loafer. Job didn't pay much either. Piddling salary. No benefits. Glad it's over. So I can get on with the rest of my life.

Yes, right there. Breathe in with the pain you say. You can feel it, can't you? All the trouble I been through. Yes, it was bad. Very bad. The bitch wanted me to clean everything in her house. Pardon my French. Was it my fault I couldn't spend all of my time on my feet? Take a look at that foot. Is that a foot that can be abused? Is that a foot that can go around scrubbing floors and dragging a vacuum cleaner up and down three flights of stairs? I'll say it isn't. Not many people around who can understand what I go through. And there she was, working on her so-called book while her house went to hell. She's writing this book that no one in the world is ever going to read. Don't ask me why. It makes you sick where she gets off. Been to college, but for all of that do you think she can run the VCR? I had her on that one. She didn't know what De-layed Programming was. Turned on the set and nothing happened. She threw such a fit I thought she was going to give birth. Afterward, when I showed her how to set the timer, she recorded "Hill Street Blues" over "Monday Night Football,"

and there was hell to pay over that, let me tell you. I smelled divorce, so I got out of there.

The way it works is that if you are going to have THE BEST of everything, you ought to at least know how to run the thing. She didn't even know what a grapefruit knife was for. Straightened out the bend in the tip. You couldn't slice a banana with it.

Plus the fact that she wanted me to change my whole way of life. I mean I volunteered to rearrange her kitchen for her. I was the one going to have to cook in it, you'd think I could have things a little bit my way. But I moved one little butter dish and her face turned purple. Course I don't think she ever will find her turkey platter. Big turkey platter with gold leaf. I doubt she ever will find it behind those cleaning bottles underneath the sink. Come Thanksgiving she'll go crazy looking for it. I can just hear her now. Blankety-blank this. Blankety-blank that. That woman had one foul mouth. Not at all what you'd expect from a Christian woman, and a Mormon to boot. Women have to be more careful with what they say, don't you think? With kids and all? She tried to open a window in the baby's room, and I thought the millennium had come. She said it stunk in there. Well, what was I supposed to do about it? Get yourself some stick-ups, I said. You know those little deodorant things you can tack up just about anywhere? But no. She's the kind of woman that doesn't believe in spending hard-earned money on "extras." Extras, she says. Like if she buys one little thing that will make my life easier, it will kill her. And that's just what I told her. Only I was nice about it. I didn't want to cause problems in the family. But the truth be known, her whole house needed fumigating. I could have cleaned forever and never got down to the bone. She didn't have baking soda in her refrigerator either. Milk tasted like Brussels sprouts.

Visualize you say. Visualize. Now what am I supposed to visualize when all I see is red? When I see cloud nine all I get is a picture of a baby Dumbo dropping through. Okay. I got it. I'm getting *Little House on the Prairie* now. Two little girls coming into the house in those high-top button shoes.

Oh, you discovered the problem I've been having with my back. Work that in good there. Without my back, how will I get along? No man around to take care of me, that's for sure. Not that I haven't had offers. It's been the curse of my life. All the good ones are already taken. Take my sister and her husband. Divorced now. They never did get along. Not even from the first. He told me right after she got pregnant with their third child. Another boy. She denied him, you know. That's how you get boys. He said I was the one he would have picked if he had met me first. But Lena was oldest. She always got the best of everything. Sometimes I think about what it would have been like with me and Freddy. It could have been me with all those kids. Only I think mine would have all been girls, don't you?

Yes, my vertical zones. I know that. But what do you think about my ankle right there? Does that look normal to you? I didn't think so. Like I told my *aunt*. A person in my condition has got to look out for herself. It's been that way my whole life.

I don't go looking for trouble. It comes after me.

What I needed was my own TV. That would have been the answer. But what did she expect every night while she's upstairs working on *The Book*, which no one in this world is ever going to read, and her husband and me downstairs watching "Dallas" and "Knots Landing" and passing the TV guide back and forth. We could have had something going there, but like I say, I never start anything. Trouble comes after me. And she didn't say one word, but I knew what she was thinking. About me, being a single woman and all.

I just let that past. But this is a fact. For all the work I did around there I could have been the wife. I was the one who knew where everything was. And it was me the husband came to ask when he needed his calculator. I was the one who knew where that was. And, you know, his reading light, one of those little ones you clamp on the book. I found that, too. I am very organized. Can't stand anything out of place. Because I can't be walking around looking for it with my feet. "A place for everything and everything in its place." Like my grandmother always said.

Yes, I'm getting relaxed. Don't you worry about me. Do that finger-thing down the front of my foot again. Feels like feathers. I could learn to live with that. Did I tell you you have a very nice way with your hands? I'm floating in a hot tub now. How's that?

Anyway, back to my feet. There I was rubbing lotion on them. You like the color I got on my nails? Coral rose pink? And she comes up and orders me out of her chair. I mean they are all her chairs, right? But she acts like nobody can sit in them but herself. Makes me feel like hired help. That's all I ever was to her. Hired help. And she used to be my favorite aunt. Can you believe it? You ought to treat family different, is all I can say. But no. I was just hired help, and she didn't have the time of day for anybody else but herself and that book.

Some book. You know where stuff like that leads. I read a chapter once. Not one word there a normal person could understand. And she had the nerve to order me out of her chair. Mrs. College-Educated. Thinks she's Queen-for-a-Day just because she's married and I'm not. Not that I haven't had offers. And I slept in the basement just under their bed. King-size waterbed with mirrors, too. It was the quietest room in the house, if you know what I mean.

Not only that, but she orders me out of her chair, and the cat can have any chair in the house. She had this Siamese, and you know how they are. If looks could kill. She treated that cat better than she treated people. Her husband included. I could have married the husband. I would have been a good wife for him. But the cat was something else. Had its own door. Came and went whenever it pleased. Brought live field mice right into the house. Walked along the counters. His butt sticking up in your face every time you turned around.

And she orders me out of her chair and that cat can have any chair in the house. And when I have to be careful of my feet. I have to massage them, night and day. It takes a lot of my time. And I have to sit in the blue velvet plush because of the way it supports my back. And she doesn't understand any of



this. I can't get it through her head. I was just putting on my lotion like always, sitting there cross-legged in my red shorts, and she comes by and accuses me of rubbing grease onto her best chair. I mean, I was halfway though creaming my left foot, and she wants me out right now. But I had her on that one. I just held up the tube. "Greaseless," I said.

I'm completely relaxed now. Do one more time around my heel. I like the way you handle that.

So the woman says to me, "Lucky," she says. She always uses my first name when she knows perfectly well that I prefer Amberdeen. It has a nicer sound to it, don't you think? Anyway, so she says, "Lucky," she says, "I want you to fix up some things for Burton's party." I want you to do it up nice. You will remember I hired on only to clean and take care of the baby. A real screamer, too. She lets him get away with murder. Worse than the cat. There'll be hell to pay when that baby grows up is my bet. But that's none of my business. I just did what I was told. Then, in addition to everything else, I had to cook for her party like I said. Big to-do over her you-know-what. So while she's puttering around the house doing just about nothing, I'm out in the kitchen trying to hunt down enough ingredients to make her look good in front of her in-laws.

Did I ever cook for her party. And what thanks did I get? I scraped my knuckles shredding carrots and nearly died from an allergic reaction to yellow onions. She buys yellow when I always tell her to get red. And then to top it off, while I'm out there maintaining order and serving her guests, she's in the back bedroom diddling my boyfriend with her fat ankles. I mean is that nerve or isn't it? I wouldn't have him back after that. Would you?

Okay, okay. I'm getting this image of something cool and green and shady. Something by John Denver. A man in Colorado in his boxer shorts getting ready to step into a cool dark pool. Yes, laying out by a pool. I'm letting it all go now.

That's where we had the party, by the pool. Picture this. Puffed shrimp. Marzipan. Ham rings. I love to make ham rings. People always think you've fussed. But they're no trouble really. Just a matter of rolling it up and slicing it off. You ever had ham rings? I'll give you the recipe.

Okay, I'm visualizing without talking. Here goes.

(One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.)

Laying out by a pool. Floating down a river. On a raft. A raft of rafts floating down a river. No. Laying out on a sandy beach. Hawaii. Nice sand, not fishy sand. Seashells lying all over the place. Brown Hawaiian giving me a sip from his glass. No. Forget that.

Okay, here it is. Laying out. Deserted beach. Warm day. Hot sand. Toes digging down to cool. Rubbing the sunscreen in just so. The ultimate in warm beach experience. Eyes closed. Surf pounding. Man walking up the beach with a cake. Don't ask me why. Are you getting all this?

The man with the cake. Big cake. Decorated. Fluffy yellow cream. Green trim. Vanilla wafers. Nicco candies. Real rock candy rocks. Everything on it. Little red hot hearts. Burns your tongue until it hurts. Big cake sitting on my chest. I'm licking

off the hearts. Fluffy cream icing all over the sides. Real fluffy. Lots of eggs. Oodles of eggs. The man with the cake licking off the Nicco candies. Tickles all the way down to your toes.

There. What do you think of that? How's that for visualization? I should have been the writer, don't you think? Or how's this? Real fluffy cake. Noise inside. Siamese cat pops out. Spoils everything. Fluffy cream, spreading and all. And the moral of that story is, you can't have your cat and eat your cake too. Tricky, huh. What do you say to that?

Ow! That hurt. My ovaries? Yes, my foot hurts there, but what's that got to do with it? Sometimes a foot is just a foot. Do you know what I mean? Leave my ovaries out if it.

No comment, huh. Here then. Take my other foot. ☹



## STONE LAKE

Snow should have fallen.

On a canvas of loss in grey light,  
spines of plants twist then droop  
toward frozen earth

where footsteps are  
coldly refused, all sound  
compact, hard.

Somewhere far back—a remembrance:  
beneath steep snow where you cave through,  
the earth still pliable, warm enough  
to steam.

Just off this trail: part of a bird's wing,  
coated with frost. The unmoved trees  
have turned their backs—  
nothing more to lose.

My feet leave no tracks  
along the shrunken lake:  
the long memory of stone-cold  
held here—the sky

like stone, the lake stone,  
the morning rocks in frozen silt  
no longer sounding separate  
to footfall, no longer any warmth  
to surrender.

—DIXIE PARTRIDGE

*How does Mormonism, with all its obvious virtues, uniquely reinforce the dangers of pride, both for those of us who think we are orthodox and those of us who think we are not?*

## PRIDE COMETH BEFORE THE FALL: MORMONISM AND THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

*By Wayne C. Booth*

AS A PRELIMINARY, MAY I ASK JUST HOW MANY of you have felt a fairly strong twinge of envy of *somebody, anybody*, in the last twenty-four hours? No hands, please. I don't want any embarrassment here. Second, how many have felt a bit cross because your talk was not, like this one, scheduled for a plenary session, only for something *somebody* thought was less important? Third and last (still no hands, because we know just how much the raising of hands means in a Mormon congregation), how many of you think those feelings of envy and anger were not just sinful but representative of the worst of all sins, pride?

This is the first chance I've had in a long time to give a sacrament meeting talk. So you'll have to forgive my being tempted into what some would call an obvious sermon, though I prefer to think of it as a meditation—a quite probably boring meditation on the paradoxes raised when we talk about pride, pride as what used to be called a deadly, unpardonable sin.

Having been raised as a devout, orthodox Mormon, I've naturally always been fascinated by the subjects of sin and repentance. A highly sinful and guilt-ridden and even sometimes repentant guy, I've had to think, almost daily, but in ways that shifted from decade to decade, about just why I did that which

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I should not have done or did not do that which I should have done, and about how I might make up for the sins. As a child of an ostentatiously pious family—a family some of my friends thought *obnoxiously* pious—I felt pretty guilty, as you may imagine, about several sins, especially about being a petty thief.

I was a *skillful* thief and never got caught—except twice: When I was five, my uncle caught me stealing his bag of marbles, and I was locked in a dark closet for a while. At seven or eight, I stole the voters' registration booklet from a post in front of the polling place—just couldn't resist all those lovely blank pages to scribble on. Mama marched me back up to the polling lady and had me weep out an apology. After that, I learned how to do the thieving better. But I remained an occasional thief, and as a thief I repented like crazy, theft by theft—a dime here, a pencil there, even sometimes a book from a bookstore—and I often wondered why the Lord let me get away with maintaining my reputation as one of the most righteous boys in American Fork, Utah.

Just after being ordained a priest, for example, I was assigned to go door to door on fast day morning and collect fast offerings, and I pocketed—well, I can't remember what percentage I stole—probably a tithe? Waves of guilt!—especially as I partook of the sacrament an hour later with an unclean right hand and besmirched, impure heart. Why, I wondered, why oh why did the Lord let me get away with *that*?

Well, surely it was because I was really, essentially, such a good, such a pious, such an important Mormon boy. I was, in fact, proud as a peacock about my absolutely deserved reputation for piety: never touched tea or coffee, always refused to have a beer or cigarette with the *unworthy* boys, never even

joined the watermelon-patch raids. Every Sunday morning I roused other boys out of bed so that the quorum I was proudly president of might have a higher attendance percentage than the *other* quorum, whose president, Garth Meyers, didn't seem to me half so pious. I attended meetings myself 110 percent. I remained a virgin—without too much difficulty. And so on. Oh, I was a good boy, I was. I sang with gusto a song popular with us at that time: “A Mormon boy, a Mormon boy, I am a Mormon boy; I might be envied by a king, for I am a Mormon boy.” (In the talk a bit of the song was sung, as remembered.) It never once occurred to me, by the way, that we didn't have any song that ran, “I am a Mormon girl; I might be envied by a queen, for I am a Mormon girl.”

I can remember even wondering whether, since I was perhaps the most pious boy in town, I just perhaps might be visited by God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ—in person, of course—and told how to take the Church on to its next glories. I knew that the Church needed *some* reforming because it had boys in it who would steal fast offering money, and even worse boys who snuck in a cigarette or chaw of tobacco now and again. And since I was destined in the long run to become God of *another* world, maybe I might be the chosen one to initiate the reform on *this* one, here and now.

(The phrase “chaw of tobacco” reminds me of a conversation with my grandfather, sometime in about 1935. Wayne: “Grandpa, were people as anxious to observe the Word of Wisdom when you were a boy as they are now?” Grandpa Booth, without a moment's hesitation: “Oh, no, not nearly. My own family was pretty strict, but most people in Alpine didn't worry about it much. I was working digging a ditch one day with a bunch of friends and all of them were chewing tobacco. They kept pressing me to take a chaw. Finally, just to get rid of 'em, I took a plug and chawed up the whole plug a bit, then spit it out. None of 'em ever bothered me again about it.”)

It took me some decades to realize that what I had been developing through those years was an especially intense Mormon version of two almost universal human vices: hypocrisy and false pride, habits of duplicity and self-exoneration that became very useful throughout life, believe me, especially during my two years as a missionary—and on through the fourteen years I spent as a college administrator.

It would be wonderful to be able to say now that I suddenly saw the light a year or so ago and got saved, or perhaps last week while preparing this talk: no more hypocrisy, no more false silly pride. It's true that I don't steal anymore, except occasionally a pencil or pad of paper from a colleague's desk. Remnants of the habits of proud duplicity, though, do of course survive, as they do in you—or should I claim only in *most* of you? Shall we have a show of hands? Obviously not.

**P**RIDE IS SOMEHOW

BOTH THE MOTHER OF

ALL THE LESSER SINS

AND ALSO SOMEHOW THE

MOTHER OF OUR GENUINE

VIRTUES.

I.  
THE DYNAMIC BETWEEN  
SINFUL ACTION AND  
SOUL-STATES

NOW if I were you listening to that autobiographical introduction, which I swear was absolutely honest and humble and un-hypocritical, I would have expected the rest of this talk to be some kind of meditation, or even a sermon, on Mormon hypocrisy and pride, and what to do about it. I have a couple of drafts of that talk, actually, but the topic of this one has burst its bounds and become an essentially unmanageable one:

on the one hand, sin in general and how we Mormons tend to deal with it; on the other, the paradox of the most general sin of all, pride, pride that is somehow both the mother of all the lesser sins and also somehow the mother of many of our genuine virtues.

The explosion of my topic came about as I prepared, over the summer, to teach a class in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. I've never taught much Chaucer before, though I fell in love with his work in a BYU class taught by P. A. Christensen, who could be considered the grandfather of all SUNSTONE editors. As I read the great *Tales* again, with an admiration that by September had increased to idolatry, I finally got around to reading carefully the “Parson's Tale,” the one that Chaucer gives most space to, climactically, at the end; one I had never finished before, both because nobody talks about it much and because as a college student I had found it just plain boring. After all, what did all that talk about pride as the cardinal sin have to do with *me*, whose only sins were masturbation and petty thievery?

The “Parson's Tale” is not a tale at all but a sermon, or what the Parson himself calls a meditation. “You won't get one of these dirty fables from me,” he explains, “the kind that abandon truth for lying fictions. Why should I sow chaff,” he intones, “when I can just as well sow wheat?”<sup>1</sup> His meditation is all about another kind of pilgrimage than the one the pilgrims think they are engaged on: the glorious Pilgrimage, as he says, that is toward not Canterbury, but what he calls celestial Jerusalem. They should be in quest of the condition of soul experienced by the genuinely repentant pilgrim. And the right path on that utterly different pilgrimage is “cleped [called] Penitence,” or Repentance. Repentance is the right path because it covers the commission of both the primary, or deadly, sins and the venial, or easily pardonable, ones.

Why should every human being—not just the visible, open sinners, the thieves and adulterers but every human being—need to repent? Why must even the most pious-appearing folk feel contrition about pride, pray for forgiveness, and try to change their lives for the better? I don't have to tell anyone here that Mormon preachers have often, though not always, el-



evated repentance in the same way to position number one, or at least number two, after faith, as it is in the Articles of Faith.

I confess—note my language—I confess that when I started reading the “Parson’s Tale” I thought to myself, “This subject doesn’t really interest me very much, here in what may well be my last decade; no wonder it gets neglected in the criticism. These days I’m actually not committing any sins—not that I consider real sins. I’m living a pretty decent life, really; haven’t stolen even a book in decades. I don’t even lust after my neighbor’s wife in my heart, let alone in practice. I’ve never committed . . . well, you get the pitch, the kind of self-congratulation one engages in when life seems to be going well and one is doing one’s best not to harm others directly.

I hadn’t read far, though, before Chaucer had turned me back to face the meaning of that kind of self-exculpation: as he moved to exhortations about the one *cardinal* sin, pride, the chieftain, the sin that produces all the others—envy, anger, despair, and so on—he forced me to see that my thoughts about being sinless were themselves inherently, inescapably tempted toward sinfulness; my thoughts had been proud thoughts, self-vaunting thoughts. Pride, the Parson says, following a long line of theologians whom I’d read earlier but sort of put to one side, is the most dangerous and least escapable of all conditions of the soul, what I’ll call soul-states. It cannot be totally escaped because the very effort to master it depends on it: the entirely admirable desire to improve *my* soul or *my* chances for salvation always tempts one toward the cardinal sin, pride, the essential error of seeing oneself as *numero uno*; which almost inevitably leads to the second deadly sin, envy, the ambition to outrank others who think *they* are at the top; which leads to the third, anger and angry treatment of the others *because* they have got ahead; which leads to the fourth, despair (*accidie*; *acedia*; sloth) because one’s ambitions and efforts at angry revenge have failed; which leads to covetousness or avarice or possessiveness, trying to pile up trivial acquirements (still enviously) to stave off the miseries; which leads to gluttony and drunkenness (“If everything else has failed, at least I can gorge”); which leads to (or, as Chaucer puts it, is *cousin* to) lechery, another pleasure than can cover up, temporarily, the blows to pride.

Faced with a list like that, even if I didn’t quite understand all of the “because,” I found that my silent thoughts of comfortable innocence suddenly seemed uncomfortably like the thoughts of that teenage self who had half expected, or hoped for, a divine visitation in some Sacred Grove.

As I read further, I found myself thinking about how being raised as a Mormon, with all the obvious virtues of that raising, especially the virtue of a genuine desire to improve myself, had centered my notions of self-improvement too strongly on a narrow code of action-sins, tangible visible offenses, while making it hard for me to recognize, let alone deal with, the subtler, destructive soul-states the Parson dwells on. That got me to thinking in turn about the contrast between the sins our leaders mostly dwell on these days and the sins of pride and hypocrisy that they themselves, like the rest of us, commit daily. And that thought landed me, by about the eighth draft,

into the real puzzler I’ve already been raising here: how *sinful* pride relates to the kind of self-respect that no thoughtful, contrite person would ever want to give up. Please don’t get your hopes up that I’ll resolve the “good pride/sinful pride paradox” in the next thirty minutes. All I can hope to do is to dramatize just why the paradox seems to me uniquely tricky for us Mormons. (If anyone thinks I’m lying about the many drafts, I have the evidence, carefully preserved. If anyone thinks that mentioning them is boasting, a form of pride—well, I’m not sure. Maybe it’s humility: after all, would a really able speaker—Ollie North has become one, according to news reports—have to construct so many drafts?)

In contrast to sins like pride and envy and hypocrisy, what are the sins that are these days most strongly emphasized, in sermons and private interviews and public punishments? I don’t have to tell this bunch that the openly castigated sins are usually not soul-states, like pride and envy and competitiveness, but tangible actions, often of the most trivial kind. Soul-states, like the hypocrisy and self-exaltation I had developed as a young Mormon—sins that in turn can produce horrible actions that never get punished at all—these do get occasional mention, especially by our more thoughtful leaders. But the general emphasis is clear.

Does anyone here want to dispute that claim? Have you heard any sermons on the problem of pride lately? (This time I did ask for a show of hands, and none went up.)

As I was talking with Pete Johnston just before he introduced me, he reminded me of a sermon by President Ezra Taft Benson, in 1986, and he gave me a copy.<sup>2</sup> I was amazed at how closely it echoed Chaucer’s ordering of the sins, with pride as the “universal sin.” The speech is full of the most astonishing warnings about pride, taken from all of our scriptures. The list is so full that hardly anyone could possibly have brought it up from memory: someone had to use concordances (as I did in preparing this talk) or computer indexes. And I’m afraid that since we now know just how feeble President Benson was by 1986, one may doubt that he himself actually wrote the speech. Will that proud conjecture get me into trouble?

In any case, it’s a fine collection of warnings, including a reminder of why the Nephites fell; it’s a speech that Chaucer would have enjoyed. The chief thing wrong with it in my view is that at too many points it reduces the sin of pride to the sin of prideful disobedience. But that would be the topic for another talk.

In any case, we usually hear more about actions that don’t really matter very much when compared with the soul-states that are “deadly,” in Chaucer’s sense. The difference between them, however, is never easy to trace. Some concrete actions, like deliberate murder or destructive infidelity, do seem to provide direct evidence of inner viciousness; some actions that seem trivial on the surface, like destructive gossip, spring equally from real viciousness; yet some actions that seem unquestionably terrible are, when the true motives are considered, quite venial—that is, easily pardonable.

That we have a history of folk confusion about all this can be seen in a couple of short anecdotes. When I was in college,

my uncle, who worked for the J. C. Penney Company, told me that stores in the larger Utah cities were troubled by a rash of thefts of Mormon undergarments, which in those days Penney's sold. Do things like that still happen, I wonder?

Perhaps an even more revealing story is the one told me forty years ago by my much-admired psychology professor at Brigham Young University, M. Wilford Poulson, another grandfather of SUNSTONE. A friend of his was eager to attend the wedding of his daughter in the temple, and went—for the first time in some years—to request a recommend. The bishop asked him about the Word of Wisdom, and he had to confess that he did drink coffee. The bishop explained that unless he dropped that sin he could not have a recommend. He went away, succeeded for a couple of months in avoiding coffee, and returned to get the recommend. As the bishop happily signed the document, he said, "I'm sure you're going to enjoy the ceremony down there in St. George. It's wonderful down there. They don't even have locks on the clothes lockers." Whereupon Poulson's friend said, or at least claimed he said, "You mean that after all that screening, they don't even get out the thieves!?"

At first such stories seem to be about sinful action: thou shalt not steal; thou stealest, therefore thou art sinful, and if thou stealest undergarments, thou art doubly sinful because of hypocrisy. But what if I told the first story like this?

A devout husband and wife living in absolute poverty are about to have their first child. The wife feels miserable because all her garments are in tatters and the midwives are coming any day now. The husband, penniless but determined to help his wife feel pure through the birthing time, goes to J. C. Penney's and steals . . . etc.

In other words, to steal a loaf of bread to keep one's family from starving is not a deadly, unpardonable sin, as we learn in *Les Miserables*; even to steal a Book of Mormon because you have no money to buy one might be forgiven when the judges in heaven are feeling benign. But what if I stole a leather-bound Book of Mormon only to be able to display it proudly on Sunday morning? In other words, the test is really the soul-state that leads to the deed, and as Poulson set up his story, the soul of the temple locker thief, like the soul of the J. C. Penney garment thieves, is clearly in pretty bad shape: going through the motions of piety is more important than being honest.

So far we have, then, a very rough distinction: action-sins, easy to spot and talk about as backsliding, and soul-state sins, elusive as all get out. Of action-sinners there are at least four

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 AND COMPETITIVENESS,  
 BUT TANGIBLE  
 ACTIONS,  
 OFTEN OF THE MOST  
 TRIVIAL KIND.

quite different kinds, each with a somewhat different probable relation to soul-state. First, many people get reprimanded or punished for actions that all of us would probably agree are *genuine* sins: sexual abuse, vicious cheating, betrayal of friends or institutions for cash or fame or sex, and so on. A second group commit offenses that most *non-Mormons* and many *Mormons* consider really trivial or even un sinful but that are sometimes made decisive in disciplinary hearings: for example, violation of selected parts of the Word of Wisdom or failure to pay tithing or to perform other duties. A third group commit *belief* sins: those who have become convinced of some truth that is condemned by one or more authorities. A fourth kind are the *belief-sinners* who add to their sinful belief condemned actions that spring from them—adding action-sin to belief-sin—by publishing heresy in *Dialogue* or *SUNSTONE* or openly practicing polygamy or homosexuality. Some just keep their sinful thoughts to them-

selves.

In discussions with Belief-Sinners, I have found that most of them feel righteous, not sinful, righteous in the very point that others consider sinful. In standing up for what is being condemned, they think that they are defending the truth and light, and they are proud of it. They are thus in their own view not sinful *Mormons* but at worst "peripheral *Mormons*"; some of them use the label employed by the late Richard Poll: *Liahona* *Mormons*, non-literalist but devoted *Mormons* who are focused on the true center.<sup>3</sup> They are well described by Poulson's favorite epigram: Every *Mormon* trusts his own unorthodoxy. Belief-Sinners, no doubt many of us here, are convinced that the present center cannot and should not hold in every respect; if the center cannot change, at least the periphery should be expanded to enfold at least this one bit of truth now neglected or denied.

Just what a peripheral *Mormon* is will depend on your definition of the center and your relation to it. One could say that peripheral *Mormons* are all those whom this or that authority at the center thinks of as either beyond the boundary or dangerously close to it. "There is a clear center, and you, you peripherals, you borderliners, had better move in closer—or you're out!" But if we define peripheral not as viewed from the center but as viewed from the periphery, the definition gets more complicated and might run like this: peripheral *Mormons* are those who think of themselves as *genuine* *Mormons*, regardless of what anyone at the center says, but who are sure that something the brethren in the center do or say or believe is mistaken. In the first definition, people at the

center arrive at the judgment, "You are a peripheral and that is a moral fault worthy of reprimand or punishment." In the second definition, the dissenter arrives at the judgment, "I am thought to be a peripheral, but that is the center's fault."

The relations among these thoughtful peripherals and the brethren who condemn them are fascinating, once one probes beneath the surface quarrels that get reported in the press. Such relations are entirely different from those between the authorities and the *action* sinners whose thoughts are orthodox. In general, Action-Sinners have no pride in their position: they may not even have hypocrisy, if their punishment comes from open confession. The brethren who judge, however, do exhibit pride, sinful or not, the inescapable pride of the judge.

Action-Sinners (except for the unorthodox believers) are likely to be guilt-ridden because of stealing tithing or secret smoking or drinking or adultery or business cheating or wearing underwear that looks, beneath the semitransparent sport shirt, like the consecrated kind but is not. They know that the judges are justified, and they can always solve their problems by a simple change of conduct: confession, repentance, and reinstatement.

For a good illustration of how sin feels to many in this group, I suggest you read "Snake Man," the 1992 Sunstone fiction contest winner by Angela Wood.<sup>4</sup> Alison, the heroine, has discovered the joys of fornication with someone she really loves. Her sin is discovered by her bishop, who accuses her of wickedness and denies her the sacrament. She becomes nearly destroyed with a sense of guilt, ostracism, and loss of her religious experience, especially the loss of bliss when taking the sacrament—and then she's restored to full happiness simply by her lover's decision to marry her and thus remove the sin that caused the trouble: "My reverence was back and so was I."

Belief-Sinners, in contrast, simply cannot, by an act of will, get rid of their heretical belief, and in not getting rid of it they almost inevitably join the Brethren in the dangerous land of the prideful or proud in spirit. The relation here becomes more nearly reciprocal: each side is equally tempted to pride. Of course, the critics themselves don't see the relation as equal in the matter of the particular belief: "The Brethren are wrong, and I am right." And the Brethren probably have no temptation to see even the slightest kind of symmetry here.

Even if Belief-Sinners decide to practice hypocrisy and keep their heresy silent, they are still likely to think, "In this one respect at least, in my holding to what I see as the truth, I am superior to those who condemn me for it. And the plain fact is that I cannot, will not, change my belief just because someone tells me it would be righteous to do so."

When, for example, an authority pronounces a solution to a problem and proclaims that further thinking on that problem is now ruled out, no thinking person can order his or her mind into passivity. Whether kept silent or made public, the thought can change only when the thinking changes it. Thus many Belief-Sinners must strongly envy the Alisons of the world, with their relatively easy solutions. In the story, Alison reveals not even a hint of any speculative doubts about the Church, except for her distaste for an authoritarian bishop, combined

with praise for her more tolerant second bishop, who finally performs her marriage ceremony—outside the temple. (In the discussion after the talk, one woman complained that I had far underestimated the power of "Snake Man." She had been moved to tears by it. I had not meant to disparage the story, though she thought I had.) For those of us who became peripherals through serious thought, the Action-Sinners are in an enviable position: just throw the cigarettes or the coffeepot or the lover away and you'll get your recommend and all will be well.

In a way, the same easy solution is available to those who become peripherals because of some questionable action by this or that leader. I can remember my own shock, at sixteen, when I heard gossip about the dishonest real estate dealings of a bishop I had admired. But the shock was easily assuaged when I chatted with people like my stake president, Clifford Young—a wonderfully sympathetic man of great integrity, who taught me that every church suffers from the mistakes and even the misbehavior of individual authorities, and that to break with the Church because it had one dishonest bishop would be absurd. In short, when Church leaders commit obviously sinful actions, peripherals can be brought back to comfortable membership just by correcting the practice. I'm thinking here of the grotesquely dishonest baseball conversions in England, the commercialized quotas that Elder Marion Hanks cleaned up as assigned by President David O. McKay. I've encountered several statements by missionaries who were sickened by the orders they received when the quota practice was at its worst, but who later became satisfied when the worst of the anti-spiritual mistakes were corrected.

In short, whether the sinful conduct is yours or a leader's, the threat of a real split simply disappears when the backslider's conduct is reformed or the cheating bishop is overlooked in the name of the larger picture.

Notice again that peripherals of the belief kind, when they don't speak out, feel hypocritical, yet when they do speak out they feel a sense of personal righteousness; they are defending the true church against genuine backsliders: the authorities. Like the polygamist factions, and unlike the heroine of "Snake Man," such critics feel little or no sense of guilt about their beliefs, no matter how much internal suffering they may feel about not being loyal or about being rejected. They are sure that the error is at the center, not out here in the periphery: "My task," they think, "if I am honest, is to ensure that at least in the long run what looks peripheral now will become the center."

I think something like this fact explains why the Church leaders now seem to be moving to more doctrinal rather than merely behavioral excommunications. Ordinary behavioral lapses have to be dealt with, of course, but they do not in any way really threaten anyone at the center. Diverse sins can be quickly and quietly handled, with no threat to the Church except for the chance that the bad behavior may produce some imitators. But when someone claims that we, the Brethren, are wrong in our thinking, that we are teaching falsehood, that we are inconsistent, that we are violating what Joseph Smith



taught, that we are concealing or denying the truth—for example, claiming that the Holy Ghost is female—that kind of peripheral talk impugns the very structure of our authority and must be stamped out, especially when the heretic is so proud that he or she insists on making the claims publicly.

This reciprocity of pride, in both the accusers and the sinners, brings us back to the Parson and his meditation on the cardinal sin. Just why is it that pride threatens us all at our very core? What is it about human life as we fall into it that makes us all so strongly inclined to be sinful? The actions we commit are still important, of course, and the Parson gets around to talking about some of them; but the soul-states that lead to the actions are the real subject, as they were in President Benson's sermon.

Too often this difference between actions and soul-states has been trivialized into a sharp contrast between faith and works, with Mormonism on the side of works. In the scriptures, faith without works is dead; but works without faith are, if you read closely, also dead. No Mormon I know of has fallen into the error of some Protestant extremists in saying that works don't count, and only a small minority of so-called Cultural Mormons have suggested that works are everything. The real difference I'm grappling with is between looking only at surface results of character, the visible "works" that seem to imply good character, and looking at your own character (no one else can do it for you), looking at it not as measured only by visible results, but as measured by standards of what constitutes a soul worth saving.

Once you start thinking about these two different emphases, you discover that we have always had in the Church a powerful minority of those who preached mainly about the second kind, the Parson's kind, the condition of the soul, and they have usually done so not in the oversimplified form, "If you feel saved by Christ you are saved"—but rather by saying that if you manage to get your soul in order the good works will follow. We have a strong tradition that says works without the right soul-state are meaningless: "Wherefore," we read in Doctrine and Covenants 22:2, "although a man should be baptized an hundred times, it availeth him nothing, for you cannot enter in at the straight [sic] gate by the law of Moses,

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neither by your dead works." (Just how much pride in me does it reveal when I claim that "straight" should be spelled "strait" here? The error has been corrected in editions later than the one I'm using, which belonged to my father.) In that tradition, the soul-state is usually summarized with the essential word "faith." Unfortunately, that word is far too often trivialized to refer not to "fundamental constructive habits of heart and mind," but rather to "unthinking acceptance of what somebody higher tells you." The more powerful minds in this tradition, however, like Obert Tanner in his wonderful book, originally but no longer a Sunday School manual, *Christ's Ideals for Living*,<sup>5</sup> and President David O. McKay in many a sermon, have concentrated on the inner virtues that must exist if the external actions are to be considered virtuous and not just conformant.

Nobody in this tradition has said that getting your soul in order is easy. But they have done their sermonizing in the service of strengthening the virtues rather than dwelling on specific actions that may or may not be deadly offenses, depending on the soul-state that produces them. I have recently taken a quick look back through the indexes of the collected sermons of various leaders, searching especially, on this preliminary cut, for references to pride and humility (I wonder if there is a CD-ROM indexing all of the sermons of all of the authorities?). Is it surprising that the references are relatively few, and that they seem to decline with the decades? Still, there is the tradition, in my view exemplified wonderfully by the sermons of Marion D. Hanks.

The opposite tradition is dramatized daily, as you all know. Consider the recent decision at BYU not to allow a screening of *Schindler's List*. BYU refused to show certain scenes of frontal nudity and violence; Spielberg refused to cut them. So students at BYU will not be shown *Schindler's List* (unless they go downtown, which I hope most of them will). Now what kind of thinking must have been engaged in to arrive at that decision at BYU? How do you decide that it is worse for students to see scenes of humiliating frontal nudity and brutal killing, both of which the movie powerfully condemns, than for them to be made to feel in their souls something of the ultimate viciousness of the holocaust? Well, you decide that specific superficial no-no's are the only thing that matters. The ultimate habits of mind and heart of our students are less important than the frozen code.

II.  
MORMON TEMPTATIONS  
TO PRIDE; INDIVIDUAL  
PROGRESSION AND HIERARCHY

As you can see, I'm wrestling clumsily with at least three questions larger than I can answer: First, "How does Mormonism's current emphasis on what precise actions are unforgivable and keep one permanently out of the celestial kingdom or, on the other hand, guarantee one's entry—how does that emphasis relate to and even endanger the construction of souls worthy of salvation?" And the second question: "How does the kind of self-esteem that makes life worth living relate to pride as a deadly sin?" And the third question: "How does the proud criticism we peripherals offer exhibit the same dangers and thus unite us, at a deeper level, with the pride of the Brethren?" I'll have time now for only a fragment chosen from where those questions lead: some speculation about just why the destructive kind of pride is uniquely threatening to Mormons. Once we ask, not just, "What must I do to be saved?" but "What must I be or become?"—once we ask just what soul-states represent in themselves a move toward salvation—we are led to speculate about just what habits of mind and heart Mormonism, by its very nature, implants and reinforces.

Before looking at the distinctive Mormon temptations, let's look again at just why, as the Parson and President Benson claim, destructive pride is a universal human problem. The pride the Parson dwells on is a sense of self-exaltation, not pride as self-respect but pride as self-importance, self-aggrandizement: the notion that I am either Number One or very close to it or wanting to rise above my neighbor. It is, as he puts it, loving oneself more than God, or elevating one's "self" and its desires over love of God and neighbor. Whether we think like Augustine—heretically, from the orthodox Mormon perspective—that we are tempted because we inherit Adam's transgression, or that it is because—as some scientists now argue—natural selection long ago turned our genes in that direction, or that it is because our culture has made us competitive, or that it is simply because we have been self-centered creatures from before the beginning—whatever the cause, the plain fact is that when we consult our hearts honestly, all of us find destructive forms of pride and the consequences of pride. We're all too much like a woman my wife and I met in Chicago decades ago, just after an apostle had stayed overnight in her home. "Believe me," she said, "I was the humblest person in the world that day."

Which leads us to the important corollary of the claim that the sin of pride is universal: as I've already suggested, it puts us all in the same boat, from top to bottom of the hierarchy. It's not that we all think we are in fact number one in any worldly measurement; everyone but the Church president knows that being number one is out of sight. The problem is that we all are tempted to think that we are number one in real importance, regardless of rank—just by virtue of being who we think we are. Even those who think of themselves as honestly

struggling to become perfect by subduing all temptations—as honestly humble—are in that very act caught in the paradox of proud ambition.

Well, then, how does Mormonism, with all its obvious virtues, uniquely reinforce the dangers of such pride, both for those of us who think we are orthodox and those of us who think we are not?

First, let's think about the orthodox, and especially about the plight of those elders who feel the responsibility for dealing with people who take part in meetings like this Sunstone symposium. In that recent issue of SUNSTONE, Richard Poll openly states his misgivings about how harmful kinds of pride are nourished by two frequently touted virtues: the virtuous claim to "prophetic infallibility" at the top, and the virtuous practice of "unquestioning obedience" down below. He cites, as quite a few others whom he dubs Liahona Mormons have done, verse 39 of Doctrine and Covenants 121: "We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion." That's the Lord talking, though it's a little hard to see why, as He says, He had to learn that from experience. In Poll's view, it is not just that the notion of infallibility is absurd and directly counter to our belief in continuous revelation; the real problem is that if I believe that I am infallible, or even if I believe that someone over me is infallible, the belief is likely to prove harmful to my character.

Poll cites a few instances of contradictory pronouncements from apostles, not to denigrate those apostles for disagreeing—he admires disagreement—but to underline the fact of contradiction: at least one of the contestants in any dispute must exhibit inescapable human fallibility. Now absolute obedience depends, of course, on a claim to infallibility, and that claim is just plain inseparable from the sin of pride.

What I suggest, then, no doubt committing the sin of pride, is that the Brethren might well worry more than they do about two ways in which Mormonism increases their own natural human temptation, and the temptation of all of the rest of us, to fall into the soul-state sins.

The first of these temptations reinforces a general danger that we inherit from American history: the overemphasis on individualism that has by now to a great degree replaced the communitarianism that marked early Mormonism. The combination of capitalism with rugged individualism has led Americans in general to sound not just like a "me-generation" but a "me-century." I'm not rejecting the essential elements in individualism: the key notion that every person is equally precious. I would deplore any return to that branch of Christianity that taught us that we are base creatures, worms who should crawl miserably through life hoping that some capricious Grace will save some of us even though we're worthless. As Mormons we're taught that we are *somebody*, indeed have been somebody important from a time before time began. Our tradition is deeply, spiritually egalitarian: every individual human soul is precious, inherently worth as much as any other soul. We are surely right to take pride in this tradi-

tion of justified self-respect.

We do take pride in it. The danger is that if you think, rightly, that in your deepest soul you are worth as much as anybody else, that indeed the whole of creation is organized to give you a chance to plow ahead and realize your full potential, you will be tempted to move a step further and conclude that just maybe you are worth a bit *more*; just maybe you can plow ahead a little faster than your neighbor and then—well, after all, isn't getting ahead the whole point? To discuss adequately this particular danger of our progressive doctrinal reinforcement of general American dangers would require a book about the tension in Mormonism between individualism and communitarianism, with a long chapter on the United Order; every time I read about why it failed, I want to weep. And every time I see business advisers like Steven Covey reducing Mormon doctrine to just what enables one to get ahead in business, I don't weep but cringe.

The second reinforcer of the wrong kind of pride is more obvious, not quite so complicated, but even more powerful: our hierarchical organization. If all the traditional theologians and prophets, including Joseph Smith and President Benson, are right in saying that every human being is sinful when tempted to think of himself or herself as number one, what could be more dangerous than to receive an official declaration from God that you have been promoted—placed ahead of the rest on the great inclined plane of progress? And what could reinforce that danger worse, for a male, than being repeatedly told, as I was when a boy, that your promotion to deacon, or priest, and on up means that you're on your way to becoming a God? Just think of how far ahead you may ultimately get. First, you are a Mormon; that puts you ahead of something like five billion other human beings, give or take a few million. It was less than half that many when I was a kid, but still the ranking felt pretty good, enviable by any king of a country with a small enough population. Which leads to elevation number two: you are a male. That puts you ahead of more than half the Mormon population; you're in the top three or four million. Then, if you keep your nose clean by obeying all of the superficial commandments—the visible trivialities without worrying about the deadly sins—you will soon find yourself rising, with increasingly impressive titles and decreasing number of rivals: you become a bishop and you are now ahead of hundreds of thousands of Mormons who are not bishops, including many of your high school buddies; you can hope to become a stake president, and so on. Wow! Your obituary listing of positions is growing longer and longer. (In high school, how hard my young self worked to ensure that my

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listing of activities in the yearbook was longer than anyone else's. And how grief stricken I was when I was not elected Representative Boy!) And let's just imagine, as I confess that I once imagined might happen to me, that you finally become an apostle. God has said it: you are now one of the top fifteen.

Even if you're the type who along the way has tried to cultivate humility, just *look* at what you've now been told: with the present seniority system, so long as you do not get caught committing any of the dozen or so *undeadly* sins—that is, if you don't drink or smoke in public and do nothing else that is banned, if you never dispute publicly and implacably with any brother higher in line than yourself, no matter what is the actual condition of your soul from day to day, you are destined finally to become number one, not just in the Church but in the world. Your only rivals, in the long run, are the

dead prophets.

Think about how good that must feel: When you become one of the Twelve, no matter how badly you commit the sin of pride (whether in your heart or publicly), the sin of envy (in your heart or publicly), and so on down the line (the only one you cannot exhibit publicly without being kicked out is number seven, licentiousness), you will be ahead of four billion, nine hundred and ninety-nine million, nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine other human beings. Your becoming number one will not depend on how you build your character through decades of trial; it will not even depend, as does the election of the Pope, on some council's judgment of your character and leadership ability or your political prowess. You are already elected: and if you can convince yourself during prayer that the voice you hear is God's voice, your voice becomes God's voice. (In the discussion afterward, I was given the rumor that there is a special secret blessing conferred upon those who finally join the Twelve, telling them that they are now *guaranteed* to end up in the celestial kingdom. How would one go about checking on that rumor?)

I don't have to remind you here just how much evidence of destructive pride certain authorities at all levels have exhibited through our lifetimes, just as we questioners have often exhibited self-aggrandizement in our various forms of peripheral rebellion. I'll not name names, because I'm afraid that if I named authorities I might be excommunicated, and if I cited overly proud rebels I might be hooted out of this room. Thus I exhibit the sins of hypocrisy and self-protection, sins that spring from the deadly, that is, *almost* unpardonable, sin of pride.

All I really want to ask, in this bit about the hierarchy, is,



first: if you had to list the reasons why no one up there changes the seniority system, where on your list would you place the motive of personal pride? But in fairness I have to add: if you had to list *your* motives for the last unorthodox talk you gave or decided not to give, where on your list would soul-state sins like false pride or hypocrisy be placed?

## III.

## WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

*The need for Mormon soul-state "orders."*

**A**TALK like this one ought to end, like those Communist sermons we used to hear, with the question "What is to be done?" The answer for us as individuals is in one sense easy: more genuine soul-searching—could we call it *genuine* prayer?—and less self-congratulation. But what about the Church? The Brethren can hardly decide to excommunicate every member who exhibits strong pride! They'd catch almost everybody, including themselves. Should they excommunicate all members who exhibit unusual pride by speaking out about this or that bit of historical evidence, or doctrinal contradiction, or misbehavior by some authority?

I think instead of more threats and excommunications, what the Church needs, desperately, is a Church-wide study commission on the deadly sins and how to cultivate their opposites, like true humility—how to maintain our desire to improve our soul-states. If the authorities don't want such a commission, then we peripherals will just have to go on constituting something like it ourselves. Perhaps we could hope for a time, in this discouraging world, when the leaders would establish not just a Soul-State Commission but a variety of subordinate "orders" like those Orders that have grown up within the Catholic Church: originally heretical but finally embraced—Franciscans, Benedictines, and so on. Such Orders provide critical crosslights on one another, as well as refuge for those who appear heretical in some lights but at heart are committed.

We could have Bensonians to study pride and pursue humility; Sunstonians or Dialogians to explore and recover from our documents whatever will strengthen character in the threatening modern world; recognized feminist groups to study the theological implications of praying to our Mother or claiming that the Holy Ghost is a female. Or we might be more systematic and simply hope for "Mormons for Truth" (including scientific matters and post-modernist theorizing of the kind Jim Faulconer so wonderfully performs), Mormons for Justice, Mormons for Mercy, and Mormons for Beauty.<sup>6</sup> As you know, we already have peripherals of these various kinds in rudimentary and largely unrecognized or even condemned forms. Why not give them official status? How would it really hurt the Church to give official status to such a lively variety of exploring devotees?

Surely the most needed of these, the most vital subordinate order, should consist of those who, like St. Augustine and St. Francis and Chaucer's Parson, and the many within Mormonism who have kept that tradition alive, are perpetually

probing the true grounds for character decline. I haven't thought of a good name for them—perhaps the Order of Humblers or Order of Pride-Sniffers? They would be charged to study, humbly but aggressively, every conference speech, every best-selling biography or autobiography of a leader or rebel, to determine the self-pride quotient. Their annual report, published with graphs showing increase or decrease, would thus provide just what the current hierarchy and every one of us heretics needs: a steady reminder that God moves in a more mysterious way than current hierarchical practices and current attacks on the hierarchy tend to acknowledge.

## IV.

## ALL IS VANITY

**P**ART IV of my talk, you'll be glad to hear, is quite short. It consists of a question and a non-answer. The question: Where would the Order of Pride-Sniffers place Wayne Booth, after hearing or reading this talk and asking, "Is he guilty of the wrong kind of pride?" The answer: How could anyone except someone guilty of outlandish pride ask such a rude question? ☐

## NOTES

1. Thou getest fable noon ytoold for me,  
For Paul, that writeth unto Thymothee,  
Repreveth him that weyven soothfastnesse  
And tellen fables and swich wrecchednesse.  
Why sholde I sowen draf out of my fest,  
Whan I may sowen whete, if that me lest?  
(Geoffrey Chaucer, "Parson's Tale"—prologue, lines 31–36 [Riverside Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson (Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 287.]
2. Ezra Taft Benson, "Cleansing the Inner Vessel," *Ensign*, May 1986, 4–7.
3. Richard D. Poll, "What the Church Means to People Like Me," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 2 (winter 1967): 107–17; and also in *History and Faith: Reflections of a Mormon Historian* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 1–13. I sincerely hope that everyone here will get around to reading Poll's fine article in the summer SUNSTONE: "A Liahona Latter-day Saint," Sept. 1994, 35–38.
4. Angela Wood, "Snake Man," SUNSTONE 17:2 (Sept. 1994), 49–54.
5. Obert C. Tanner, *Christ's Ideals for Living* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union Board [n.d.; preface dated 1954]).
6. I'm not quite sure where to fit the polygamists. Perhaps an order of Restorationists: those who want to go back to glass sacrament cups; those who hate the three-hour Sunday sessions, or who lament the demise of mid-week meetings like the old MIA and Primary and Relief Society meetings; those who, like me, miss some of the old hymns or the wordings that have been changed: in short, an Order of Nostalgics? The hymn wording I most want restored, by the way, is the one recently changed in "Today while the Sun Shines." They've dropped the old conclusion, "There is no tomorrow / But only today," and changed it to "Prepare for tomorrow by working today!" (*Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* [Salt Lake City: LDS Church, 1985], 229.)

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# “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?”

## MEDITATIONS OF A GAY MORMON ON THE 22ND PSALM

*By Oliver Alden*

*I was cast upon thee from the womb:  
thou art my God from my mother's belly.*  
—PSALM 22:10

I GREW UP BELIEVING FIRMLY IN GOD AND SEEKING, as best I could, to do what I had been taught was right and moral. From the time I was small, I was what most people thought of as a “good” boy, though naturally not a perfect one. I could count easily on one hand the number of lies I told while growing up. I never stole. I never cheated. I never tried drugs. I never smoked. I worked hard in school. I got good grades. I was well-liked and openly admired by teachers, by friends, and by their parents. I graduated from my high school with an unusually large portion of the honors and awards it offered and, I realize upon reflection, an unusually small portion of the animus that peers so often direct at the kind of students who receive them. I remember few who did not like me and none who did not think well of my character and integrity.

At seventeen, at college, I went through my rebellious period. This turned out to be quite mild, consisting—in its entirety—of getting drunk several times (alcohol was not considered immoral in the faith in which I had been raised). At an institution whose student body was then characterized by fairly widespread drug use and even more widespread sexual license, my actions were thought far from the stuff of spectacular wickedness. I remained honest, decent, and chaste. I was one of very few who still attended church regularly. Not saintly,

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*OLIVER ALDEN is a pseudonym. The name is that of the central character in George Santayana's novel The Last Puritan.*

perhaps, but still good by the standards with which I had been raised, and certainly by those that constituted the norm around me.

My rebellious period also turned out to be quite brief. Several months into term, I learned of the restored gospel, developed through prayer a firm conviction of its truthfulness, and joined the Church in the teeth of vehement opposition from my family and to the nearly universal horror of my friends. These I ignored. What could they possibly say that would override a revelation from God?

I took to the gospel wholeheartedly. Since my baptism, I have sought to serve God to the best of my abilities and to remain close to the Spirit. I have never turned down a calling (although my home teaching record is dismal). I served an honorable if unspectacular mission. I jettisoned my first love as a career in favor of one that would better allow me to provide for the family I was taught should one day form the focus of my life. Before embarking on my career, I went to the temple to pray for inspiration as to where to pursue it. I even chose names for the children I expected to have.

I teach Sunday School now and try, at least, to seek the promptings of the Spirit in the lessons I prepare. I have been told that people sometimes feel the Spirit when I teach or when I bear my testimony. I treasure the card I received from one student, thanking me, in her words, for internalizing the teachings of the Savior and for helping the students to internalize these as well. I have devoted great energy and resources to getting the temple work performed for my ancestors. I spend a week of my vacation time each year in archives in Europe, tracing my forebears back beyond where the micro-

filmed records begin. Performing the temple work for them has been a source of tremendous joy and satisfaction to me. I strive to keep the law of chastity, and have, to this day, never had sex with anyone, man or woman.

I love the temple. I have nourished few ambitions in the Church, though I once flattered myself that my testimony and facility with foreign languages would stand me in good stead as a mission president some day, and I looked forward with hope to the time when I would have the chance to serve as one. A Sister I admire greatly once told me (to my genuine surprise) that I, more than anyone she knew in our ward save one, seemed to have built my life around the Church.

The only thing that clouds the picture, of course, is that I am gay.

*But I am a worm, and no man;  
a reproach of men, and despised of the people.*  
—PSALM 22:6

**I**T took me three decades to bring myself to the point where I could admit that I am gay, even though the inclinations—both emotional and, as I matured, sexual—go back as far as I can recollect, to age six maybe, or eight. Even then, I recall sensing that something was terribly wrong, and I realized, with waxing horror at each stage of my growth, that my responses differed profoundly from what I was told they should be. The centerfolds my compatriots smuggled with them on junior high Boy Scout campouts (our troop's sponsor, an American Legion post, was untroubled by such things) merely repelled me. Even in high school, female anatomy never held for me any of the fascination that grew to be so all-consuming in the lives and conversations of my friends.

I could never understand why it did not. On dates, I had to force myself to do the little that could, in view of my moral stance, be expected of me.

Even more difficult was realizing what it was that I felt instead; realizing that I was becoming something my society and my religion proclaimed to be wrong; realizing that my deepest emotions and inclinations were "defective"; realizing that I was turning into the sort of monster that I had been taught should horrify even me. As a young man, it is hard to comprehend these things and even harder to come to terms with them, with no guidance, with no answers, with no role models except laughingstocks, with no one who understands.

The mockery and derision cause great pain to those who grow up gay. Still, people give vent to their scorn, even in the Church. In recent years, I have sat in priesthood meeting and heard gays—and by extension myself—described as an "abomination in the sight of the Lord" (by a class member, not by the instructor) and have sat in stake conference and heard

gays described as "vile" and "disgusting" (by the stranger next to me who volunteered that he hadn't darkened the Church's door in thirty years, not by the apostle conducting the meeting). Of course, neither man guessed that he spoke of me. Nor did my former boss, who, unsuspecting, made it clear that he did not want a gay man working for him and would go to great lengths to ensure that this did not occur. For better or worse, I am one of the very great number of gays who do not fit society's stereotypes. I have stood, bemused, as people who assumed me to be straight explained to me, with great earnestness, how "you can always tell who they are." Until I stopped trying to pass as straight, I succeeded. After all, most people see me as masculine and moderately athletic. I attend hockey games and heavy metal rock concerts, dislike Broadway show tunes, and can't cook to save my life. People long thought it acceptable to say demeaning things about gays in front of me. But I did change departments to get away from that boss, suffering a loss of seniority in the process. I now earn a fifth less than I would if I were straight. Fortunately, since I picked my career to enable me to support a family that I am now evidently not going to have anyway, I didn't really need the money.

Not surprisingly, I have given a lot of thought to the possible causes of my homosexuality. I do not claim to understand them. After all, the experts themselves remain unable to agree. One national figure I consulted pointed me to studies suggesting that homosexual orientation could result from the type of hormonal injections my mother had been given to avoid miscarriage; had I been born a decade earlier, it could have been thalidomide instead, and I might have no arms. A second expert thought this

explanation completely wrong. Recent studies emanating from respected institutions (and widely reported in the media) suggest that there may even be a strong genetic component to homosexuality, if genes are not actually the sole determinant.

One thing I do know is that, at least in the overwhelming majority of cases I have encountered, homosexuality is not elected. Perhaps the most vicious lie current is that people choose to be gay. Why would any sane person ever do so, in the face of extremely fierce, and often deeply internalized, societal disapproval? In the teeth of the scorn and derision known to result? At the risk—if you are Mormon—of expulsion from your community in this life and condemnation to a lesser place in the next? Availability of choice—except perhaps in the case of someone who is genuinely bisexual—rings untrue in the realm of human sexual orientation, as one readily sees from the somewhat perplexed look returned by a straight person who is asked when exactly it was that he or she chose to be straight. Certainly, being gay was not something I could

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gay was not something I could recall choosing. In fact, for many years I strove desperately with everything I had to choose against it.



recall choosing. In fact, for many years I strove desperately with everything I had to choose against it.

*Why art thou so far from helping me,  
and from the words of my roaring?  
O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not;  
and in the night season, and am not silent.*

—PSALM 22:1–2

I NEVER doubted God's ability to perform miracles, and the very manner of my conversion reaffirmed to me their reality and their availability in individual human lives. It is not surprising, then, that I had faith that God could perform a miracle here, too—a faith that was strengthened when I received my patriarchal blessing and heard, to my intense relief, its promise that I would marry and have children. I need not worry, I thought. The lepers in the New Testament were cured. God will cure this problem, too. Certainly, it was a righteous request. In fact, I wondered many times—and even asked priesthood leaders—why they couldn't just give me a blessing and make everything all right. After all, I certainly felt that I had experienced many other miracles.

My faith gave me strength enough to go for long periods believing that I really was (or at least soon would be) straight, and I identified myself as such to myself and others. True, every year and a half or so, something (usually something I could not restrain with mere effort or discipline, like a dream) would remind me of where my mind went if I did not keep it under absolute control. At such times, my faith that God would cure me would often waver. Once, when wondering why God had let me suffer this for so long, I received a peaceful spiritual assurance that I had voluntarily agreed in the pre-existence to take this on. I was not told why. Nonetheless, with great relief (and even greater hubris), I not only took this revelation to mean that I would be cured, but assumed that I could then go on to serve as an exemplar of how this was done, living proof of the rewards of faith. There would have been purpose to the suffering, I thought; it would benefit others as well. So I held on, and strove mightily to obey every commandment and to do all that was expected of me, to clutch the iron rod so tightly that even priesthood leaders suggested I was too hard on myself, and prayed fervently many times each day. And waited. For fourteen years.

*Be not far from me; for trouble is near;  
for there is none to help.*

—PSALM 22:11

I HAVE always been the sort who believes in wrestling any problem to the ground, so I actually did a lot more than just wait for those fourteen years. God, they say, helps those who help themselves. So I spent years consulting half a dozen different counselors and psychologists, and one nationally known researcher on psychosexual development, paying out many thousands of dollars in the process. Nothing happened. (Actually, that is not true. A lot happened. The better psycholo-

gists worked wonders on virtually everything that troubled me except the homosexuality.) I also read anything suggested as helpful on the subject of homosexuality. Nothing offered me any real insights into anything but possible etiologies. Nothing provided a method for overcoming homosexuality itself.

One exception was a sort of guidebook written by a born-again Christian who said he had become straight. This book disappointed me particularly, as its thesis seemed to be that men became homosexual out of a failure to bond with their more truly masculine compatriots, and out of a resultant sense of exclusion from the true male fold. By developing such bonds—and emotionally close but non-sexual relationships—with the truly masculine, homosexuality could be overcome. I had two problems with this thesis. The first was that, at least by the time I finished my education, I had deeply bonded, and developed very fulfilling emotional, non-sexual relationships with quite a number of men, including some who must have been among the most stereotypical representatives of this masculine fold. Many of my closest friends at school were what everyone—unjustly, I think, in view of my friends' innate intelligence and capacities—called "jocks." Four of us (the other three were football players; I was rowing crew) hung out together, partied together, went out drinking together (three beers and a ginger ale each round; they knew my standards), and helped each other out on our homework. Frankly, had there been such a thing as a truly masculine fold, I had kind of thought I was in it. Curiously, I seem also to remember many men who were manifestly not in it, but who were nonetheless straight. Worse still, the book never explained how you became straight once you had so bonded. It just happened, apparently. But it hadn't happened to me. It reminded me of a cartoon I once saw showing two scientists in front of a blackboard on which one had scrawled a long and complex series of mathematical formulae and obscure symbols, evidently delineating the steps of some complicated scientific process. Smack in the middle, however, was a step which read "then a miracle occurs." It seemed we were back to miracles.

Throughout this period, I also sought the help and advice of nearly all the men who served as my bishops. To their credit and to that of the Church, none ever reacted with unkindness or prejudice (the fact that I hadn't actually done anything may have played a part here), and each responded with care and concern and with his most sincere attempt to help. Unfortunately, the help was almost universally limited to offering comfort and encouragement and then referring me to more psychologists. True, one bishop did propose castration as an option, but I was not sure that he meant it entirely seriously, and I was sure (I knew him) that he was young, frightened, desperate to be able to offer any sort of solution, and generally in over his head on this one. Besides, his other idea—to bury myself in my career in the hopes of successfully suppressing all sexual impulses—was one I more or less adopted for the next decade. The result, naturally, is that I did not end up being straight, but did end up being fairly prosperous. This is not what I had in mind, of course, but it beats being gay and poor.

I also stumbled, at the end of the fourteen years, onto an in-

formal group of Church members who met together to seek to overcome their homosexuality. The group was diverse in every respect: age, occupation (construction workers, oddly, seem to have been disproportionately represented), degree of masculinity, degree of activity in the Church, marital status. Several even had children, which certainly suggested that they were able to be more physically responsive to women than I could imagine being. A few (all married) claimed that they had successfully overcome homosexuality. Of course, six months later, one of these was on the phone telling me that he felt torn between staying with his wife, his children, and the Church and chucking it all to go find the man of his dreams. Gradually, I began to figure out that what at least some of these men had meant when they said that they had overcome homosexuality was that they had managed to stop resorting to anonymous sexual encounters with other men. By that standard, certainly, I had never been gay at all. The problem was that I was still attracted exclusively to men. Worse yet, it was still men with whom I would find myself falling in love.

Still, I tried as best I could to change. I dated. I had girlfriends. It was a chore, although on the surface, at least, it must have looked like it worked. I still recall how flabbergasted I was one day when an acquaintance from my singles' ward sat me down and demanded to know how it was I managed to go out, at the same time, with the "two most beautiful women in the ward." (His description; I had honestly not noticed.) Granted, an inordinate number of my girlfriends tended to live in distant cities (amazingly, it took me years to figure out why). The physical demands made upon me were difficult to fulfill, and terribly frightening. (Imagine, if you are straight, how it would feel to have to kiss romantically someone of the same sex, and to know that, if you were what you were supposed to be, you would want to.) I once even went so far as to have myself tested for mononucleosis to escape an impending evening of French kissing with a particularly aggressive girlfriend. (I had previously tried to plead uneasiness about whether this behavior was morally permissible, but she claimed she had checked with her bishop, and he had told her it was fine.) Toward the end, desperate, I even discussed marriage with one girlfriend whom I truly loved—though unfortunately only platonically. Then I decided that I cared for her too much to do that to her life and broke it off. A great woman, she understood. She remains one of my closest friends.

I feel regret now for my behavior towards some of the women I dated, for the hurt and confusion they often felt and

that I couldn't explain to them. But I always nourished the hope that some day just one of them might work, that one day I would feel some desire for any of them. I couldn't, back then, admit even to myself that the pretending never got any easier.

*All they that see me laugh me to scorn:  
they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,  
He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him:  
let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.*

—PSALM 22:7–8

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### REGRET MY

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THINGS only got worse with time, as it became harder and harder to deny with any conviction that all those years of counseling, all those years of vigilance, all those years of prayer seemed to have availed me nothing. The homosexual drives, far from diminishing, took on ever more alarming strength from year to year, and then even from month to month, until they loomed nearly overwhelming. I had still not given in to them, but there began for the first time to be some close calls, and then others that slid closer still.

More terrified than I had ever been in my life, I discussed each of these with my bishop, who responded with an outpouring of patience and love and concern, but with no solutions, which manifestly pained him deeply. He strove to offer what encouragement he was able, and what balm he could for the self-loathing I so clearly evidenced, pointing out that I hadn't yet actually done anything serious, that temptation itself was no vice, that I ought, in view of the way I was actually still living my life, feel morally triumphant. "How could I?" I asked. He, if tempted by the sight of a woman, could curb his thoughts and walk away triumphant in his victory over acknowledged natural drives. For me, such victories were only another form of defeat, one more triumph in a battle no normal person should need to fight, one more shattering reminder that what lay at my very core was not something "righteous if kept within proper bounds," but something evil. "Even when I win," I recall telling him, "I lose."

The suffering was horrible, in the way it only can be when the enemy against whom you wage war is yourself. To make it through, I drew solace and strength from the stories of people who had suffered far more horribly, but who had nonetheless endured. Interestingly, the two finest examples I found of this dogged nobility amid suffering were women: the Russian author Irina Ratushinskaya, shipped off by the Soviets to years of

indescribable privations in the gulag, in part for her beautiful poems about God;<sup>1</sup> and Nien Cheng, with her depiction of the ghastly physical and mental cruelties she endured at the hand of China's Cultural Revolutionaries.<sup>2</sup> I see now that, in my copy of the latter's book, I turned down the corner of the page on which she had written, upon finally leaving China, "God knows how hard I tried to remain true to my country."

It came as a devastating blow, then, when I heard a Church leader say in a talk that patriarchal blessings promising marriage and children might find fulfillment only in the next life. As nothing else had worked, that had remained my last shred of hope. The great miracle on which I had pinned everything might be denied me in this life, it seemed. I could not understand why. I had struggled with everything I had. I had kept myself chaste for thirty-one years. Why, I begged my bishop, won't God just take this away? In sorrow and real anguish of soul, he told me he did not know. Despairing, I asked God directly. True to his promises, he had never seemed far, even in the worst of those times. The response was clear: "That is why I gave you everything else."

It took me months and years even to begin to comprehend that statement's significance. At the time, desperate, overwrought, I must admit it meant little to me. "Everything else" with which I had been blessed looked trivial when I was afraid I was going to lose my soul, and I was becoming desperately afraid. The decades of battling to a standstill my most basic drives had left me worn and exhausted. I felt like someone who had fallen over a cliff but caught onto a branch that he was grasping onto for dear life, wondering, as he felt his strength ebb and despairing of rescue, how much longer he could hold on. Still, I did not want to fall, did not want to become what I had been taught to despise. More than anything, I wanted to be able to face God with a clean record. If I lived, however, it seemed only a matter of time before this record would become tarnished. I decided that I would rather be dead. Unfortunately suicide, too, was said to be a serious sin. I regretted that there were no wars for which I could volunteer and in which I might be killed. So for countless evenings, as I said my prayers, I begged the Lord to take my life during the night.

*My strength is dried up like a potsherd;  
and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws;  
and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.*  
—PSALM 22:15

THE Lord did not take my life, so I made plans to take my own. I concluded that a pistol in the mouth would be the best method. It would be quick and would allow no second thoughts. It could not conceivably be any more painful than remaining alive. Home would be a poor site for the act, since I lived alone and my corpse might not be found for some time. I considered my office, where my secretary would presumably find my body in the morning. I ultimately settled, with a bit of dark humor, on my boss' office. I disliked him and figured that, if I was going to spray blood and

brains all over someone's walls, they might as well be his.

The main barrier to suicide, oddly, proved to be one of the Church's teachings. Not its teaching that suicide was a sin. I was already convinced that the choice lay between that and homosexuality, which was also a sin but somehow seemed much worse in the eyes of the Church. After all, I had never sat in meetings and heard someone call suicides an "abomination in the sight of the Lord." What I couldn't get around was the teaching that you took your mind intact into the next life. "What if I blow my brains out," I thought, "and then I wake up in the next world and I'm still gay?" What if suicide didn't actually work?

The other barrier was my bishop. He had watched me and listened to each stage of my struggles throughout the long and agonizing process. He may have lacked for grand solutions, my bishop, as my feelings jerked back and forth for weeks and months with the ebb and flow of my strength, as I struggled to endure one day only to plunge into utter despair the next, but he was always there, with love and compassion and caring greater than most human beings seem able to muster. He hurt for me. I doubt that as a straight man he will ever understand completely what it feels like to be gay, but he came closer in those days to understanding the pain that gay members of the Church endure than anyone I have ever seen, before or since. And for months he kept me alive, until one day, desperate, at wit's end, he finally blurted out that he would much rather that I went off to be gay than that I killed myself, thereby finally triggering in me the realization that the hatred of homosexuals that lay at the root of my suicidal drive did not ultimately come from my religion. It came from me.

*But thou art holy,  
O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.  
Our fathers trusted in thee:  
they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.  
They cried unto thee and were delivered:  
they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.*  
—PSALM 22:3-5

MY desperation did not lessen, and my sexual impulses seemed only to wax ever stronger. I felt I had no strength left, more drained than ever in my life. Then one day, a young and deeply spiritual woman in my ward in whom I had confided my problem—and who had loyally supported and encouraged me throughout my struggles—repeated to me something she had heard at a fireside. The scriptural promise that God would give no commandment to his children unless he prepared a way for its accomplishment (1 Ne. 3:7), the speaker had suggested, cut both ways. Once you really had done everything humanly possible on your own, you could pray to God and tell him that you had reached the end of your resources, and he would then supply the rest.

I have always been wary of doctrine that rests on no more solid authority than a statement at a fireside, but this particular statement certainly seemed reasonable. Throughout the scrip-



tures, when God wanted a humanly insurmountable obstacle overcome, he intervened when his children reached the limits of their powers. Besides, at that stage of my spiritual crisis, I would have grasped at anything that could afford hope. I returned to my knees and told God that I had reached the end of my rope, and that he would have to do something.

It had never crossed my mind, of course, in all those years of struggle, to ask God if he had any plan in regard to all this. I knew that I wanted my orientation changed, and I trusted in God to do it. After all, he would have to change it if I were to become what the Church taught (and what I believed) I was supposed to be. I was unprepared, therefore, for the response I received.

*He hath not despised nor abhorred  
the affliction of the afflicted;  
neither hath he hid his face from him;  
but when he cried unto him, he heard.*  
—PSALM 22:24

THE response I received was that if I kept with a man the same moral standards the Lord expects of his heterosexual children—chastity prior to a lifetime commitment and fidelity within it—my salvation and exaltation would not be lost. I was warned, however, that it would not be an easy life.

“Well,” I thought after I finished praying, “that can’t be right.” I knew what the scriptures said. I knew what the Church said. This was ridiculous. It also certainly wasn’t the solution I would have chosen had my preference been asked. I wondered if I had finally cracked under the pressure and taken leave of my senses completely. Had I manufactured this? The only problem was that the revelation had been unmistakably clear. It had been strong. And it had been delivered by the same experience—by what I term the same voice, for lack of a better metaphor—that had first spoken in the past to confirm to me the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, that had guided me on my mission, that had borne witness to me of so many other things in experiences in the temple, and that had throughout the years provided guidance which, even if seemingly unreasonable when given, had always proved right in the end. That same voice. I felt I knew that voice. I knew that it had never guided me wrong in the past.

Still, I was reluctant to trust this experience. I found my bishop at church the next Sunday and told him what had happened. His initial response surprised me. “I know you to be very sincere and spiritual,” he said. “If that’s what you were told, then I guess that’s what you were told.” Later, of course, once the implications of what I had said had sunk in, he was careful—as he has been in each discussion of the issue since—

to stress the rules of the Church on homosexual relations and to let me know that he had had occasion to sit on Church tribunals judging men who had made similar statements but who had been excommunicated anyway. (What, I wondered, if they were telling the truth?) Later still, deeply troubled by his inability to make the prescribed moral judgment of homosexuals comport with the characteristics of the man he actually knew, he even cornered a general authority to ask him if he thought there might be a revelation on the issue soon.

Meanwhile, I retested my personal revelation. Same answer.

I waited until calmer times, and asked again and again over the coming weeks and months. Same answer. I went to the temple. (I had asked my bishop whether I should continue to go; he responded that I should go until I actually did something that would prevent me from being there.) Same answer. Eight months after the original revelation, having made certain I had resolved anything I could think of with my bishop, I went to the temple to ask one more time. Same answer.

In my own way, I thought that I might be able to put the Lord’s logic to the test (that hubris again). I loved the temple and attended frequently, having had at the time probably among the better temple attendance records of anyone in our ward under the age of seventy. (In addition to its inherent spiritual power, the temple offered brief respite from the pressures of the sexual orientation issue, as neither gender looks terribly alluring in temple clothing.) Would it, I wondered, still be appropriate for me to attend the temple once I had “married” a man? Naively, I figured I had the Lord boxed in on this one. He would have to say either yes, from which I could infer that one of the Church’s limits was simply wrong, or no, from which I could conclude that the Lord

had no business giving me permission to go off and do this in the first place. Of course, when I prayed, the Lord said neither. Instead, as happens from time to time, the answer came as a recollection of a scripture, its implication obvious: Paul’s admonition to the Corinthians that they abstain from eating meat sacrificed to idols, whatever their own beliefs about it might be, lest they weaken the faith of their brethren. (See 1 Cor. 8:9–12). I understood from that prayer that if I married a man I would no longer attend the temple because, whatever the right or wrong might be, there would be too many people who would not understand and whose faith it might injure.

In retrospect, I realize that this answer also served to stress to me another important truth about the earlier revelation: that it was personal to me, and could not of itself be understood to be of broader application. Each of us, I believe, can receive from the Lord guidance about how we are to conduct our own

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lives. The revelations that establish broader rules, that contain doctrine, that are of wider or universal application, are, I believe, vouchsafed to those with proper authority. The Lord, it seems, may sometimes suspend his own rules for his own reasons—Nephi, seeing the unconscious Laban, was ordered to violate two of the ten commandments given to Moses. Like Nephi, however, we each bear the responsibility of ensuring that any revelations we receive have truly come from the proper source. In my case, the familiarity of the voice and consistency of the responses at widely varying times and in widely varying circumstances convinced me that it had.

I try to emphasize the same individual responsibility to the gay brethren whom I home teach. (Good pragmatists that they are, my priesthood leaders have, since learning of my situation, assigned me to heavily gay home teaching routes. In at least one case, I have been the only member of the ward with whom the brother in question—a returned missionary—would agree to talk.) The bottom line, I tell those I home teach, is that no one should ever do anything for which he or she had not received the Lord's approval. I urge these men to pray sincerely about how they should live their lives. I do not presume to know the answer for any individual but me. But these men know that I am gay, and they see that I have sought to remain true to God and, to the best of my abilities, to his church.

*My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation:  
I will pay my vows before them that fear him.*  
—PSALM 22:25

**I**T was not an easy thing at the beginning (and it has never been an easy thing since) to remain true to the Church. The Church seems often to send an unmistakable message that it does not want men like me in its community. Many leave, as a result, often taking with them a legacy of profound bitterness. It is a source of great pain to me to realize that the official position, at least, of the organization around which I have built much of my life appears to be that I do not belong in its midst. Granted, I am more fortunate than others I know in the same situation, for in my case this pain is palliated by the unstinting love and heartfelt efforts to include me in their families shown by ward members of virtually every political stripe and religious opinion—including some whose support is frankly quite amazing. Still, there are times when the sense of being something of a pariah becomes very discouraging, and I have to keep reminding myself why it is that I keep coming week after week.

The reason is an experience that ironically was triggered in large part by my own pride. In the October 1990 general conference, at which time admitting I was gay was all still very new to me, one of the general authorities delivered a talk highly critical of homosexuals. Angered, I walked out, but then went to the temple grounds to think about what to do. I felt firmly convinced that there was no place for me in the Church. I recall telling God that I was sorry, but that I just could not keep attending. I didn't belong with those people, I

told him; they didn't want me there. I am not sure that I expected any response, but I got one anyway. "Whatever they do to you," I was asked, "just continue to go." So I do.

This resolve has also sometimes cast me in the unexpected role of defending the leadership of the Church to gay members (and former members) bitter about the perceived brutality of the Church's position on homosexuality. In their defense, it is hard not to understand the depth of their feeling, when some have had friends or acquaintances in the Church who felt compelled to take their own lives over the issue, and when many have come close to suicide themselves because they had been taught that the alternative was even more horrible. But I ask them, nonetheless, whether if they themselves had not been through the experience of being gay they would understand it, whether they would have any notion at all of what it was like. They all admit that they would not. How then could they expect the general authorities, who presumably have not been through it, to understand? I do allow myself, however, to ask whether it is appropriate for the Church to respond to homosexuality with such severity when its own representatives concede that they do not understand the problem, and that they have no solutions at all to offer.

*I will declare thy name unto my brethren:  
in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.*  
—PSALM 22:22

**I**HAVE also had some fairly heated discussions with more activist gays about my continued affiliation with the Church. They argue that the Church viciously persecutes its gay and lesbian children. How, they demand, can I continue to attend this church—and to teach a class there, no less? How, for heaven's sake, can I continue tithing to them? Don't I see what that church is doing? Don't I know about the suicides?

Of course I do; I was almost one of them. Their real argument is that my primary loyalty should be to the gay community—to my people, in their minds—and they are angry that it is not. My response (often preceded, if the attack has been a bitter one, by the statement that this is my life and they have no right to tell me how to live it) is that while gays and lesbians are indeed my people—at the very least we have endured a common lot of discrimination and persecution—the Mormons are no less my people. I wasn't raised with the Mormons, and I chose them, true, but I couldn't reverse that choice now even if I wished to because the fundamental beliefs that guide my life have become too deeply rooted in my soul. Although it would certainly make my life vastly easier, I can no more walk away from my faith and pretend I do not believe it than I can pretend that I am not gay. Both rest at my core. One accuser, upon hearing this, conceded quite frankly that he simply did not understand religious conviction. Admittedly it is more difficult—because, to an extent, they are right—if they then sneer and say, "But don't you see? They don't want you." Still, the answer is simple. "It's not for them that I go."

*The meek shall eat and be satisfied:  
they shall praise the Lord that seek him:  
your heart shall live forever.*  
—PSALM 22:26

I BEGAN slowly, gradually, to enter the gay community. It did not at first prove an easy process—partly, at least, because I had only one gay friend (I knew him from Church; at the time I met him he had been dating women), and he now lived in a distant city in California. The greater problem, however, was the preconceived notions I had absorbed from the media (my primary source of information, really) about what gay people were like. After all, didn't we all learn from television that all gays are obsessively promiscuous, dissipated, shallow, and devoid of genuine emotional ties and spiritual yearnings? Not to mention any innate sense of decency. I was frightened by this picture. It certainly was nothing like what I desired out of life. I also felt lucky that my history up until that time had run the course it had. Even though there had been so many long years of struggle, I had, by the time I finally came out, at least reached a place in my personal development where I had the confidence to decide for myself how I would conduct my life as a gay man. I had most certainly not been provided—by the media or by anyone else—with a positive role model showing how to live a gay lifestyle that was decent and moral. I wondered if, had I confronted my orientation a decade earlier, I would not simply have assumed that I had no choice but to become what society and the media had told me a gay man was supposed to be.

Reality proved much different from the depressing picture the media had painted for me. I would never deny that the stereotype of sexual promiscuity holds true for significant segments of the gay community. I have several gay acquaintances now who undeniably fit the description. Some have even tried to tell me that such sexual activity is simply part of being gay. (Often they have said this in the patronizingly avuncular tone people usually reserve for conveying obvious truths to slow learners, as if they expected me to respond, "My gosh, you mean I'm supposed to have been sleeping around all this time? And no one told me?") In contrast, I also have both gay friends whose sexual experience would be considered by the standards of straight society to be extraordinarily limited, and gay friends who, in their late thirties, are still with the same men they got together with in college two decades ago. One acquaintance has never been sexu-

ally active with any man other than the one with whom he exchanged rings a few years back. Not a single one of my non-member heterosexual friends can make the equivalent statement regarding his or her spouse. Some of my member friends cannot either.

My experiences in dating over the last few years also contradict the stereotypes about gay men and their sexual activity. Lack of assertiveness never having been one of my shortcomings, I tend to make my moral code and the religious convictions that underlie it clear on the first date and to suggest that

if my date will be unable to accept them we probably should not go out. Of all the men I have dated in this period, only two indicated that my moral code would pose a problem for them. (One of these two then proceeded to go out with me for the next six months anyway.) Another, who was himself from a conservative, though different, religious background, actually became angry at himself for not having adopted similar standards. Obviously, of course, these men are not a representative sample, as my own biases are involved and I am disinclined to date men known to be very promiscuous. What has frankly surprised me is that there are so many gay men who are not promiscuous at all, and that there have been so many who were willing to deal with a code of morality that even in the heterosexual world is considered rather extreme. (The next dating hurdle that sometimes arises is trying to explain that I don't go to movies or sports events on Sundays because it's the Sabbath. That usually leaves them speechless.) In any case, I have concluded that, like the straight world, the gay world encompasses a tremendous variety of lifestyles and moral codes. Unfortunately, it seems to be largely the promiscuous ones that receive wide publicity.

One of my best friends, a staunch member of the Church, once asked me bluntly if I didn't resent promiscuous gays for giving gay men like me a bad name. I responded that our society and most of our churches send unmistakably clear messages that if you are gay you are already morally defective, depraved, and evil just for being

what, through no real choice of your own, you are. (Even if you are celibate, the popular message in the Mormon community is largely the same, whatever official distinction the Church may draw between orientation and conduct.) If you are already doomed, I asked—if you are already beyond the pale with no hope for salvation or acceptance just for being what you are—what use is it to draw lines in the sand about personal morality? It's all over anyway. What makes it possible

I  
FELT FIRMLY  
convinced that  
there was no place  
for me in the  
Church. I recall  
telling God that I  
was sorry, but that I  
just could not keep  
attending.  
"Whatever they do  
to you," he told  
me, "just continue  
to go."



for me to draw my moral lines is my personal belief, derived from my religious experiences, that if I comport myself in a certain fashion that (like the moral rule for heterosexuals) circumscribes but does not deny my nature, I can still believe that I stand steadfastly on the side of good and right. It is often those deprived of this sense of moral integrity and self-respect by the internalized judgments of society who ultimately plunge into promiscuity. In a real sense, such men are merely doing what society has told them it expects of them.

I see this particularly strongly among the gay men I know who are or were LDS. There's an astonishing number of such men, I have found. In fact, the first reaction of most gay men in my city when I tell them that I am Mormon is to laugh—not at me, and with no malice, but simply because they have heard the same statement so many times before. I do not mean to suggest that we are statistically overrepresented in the gay community. At least part of the phenomenon must be attributable to the fact that the depth of their connection to the Church while growing up or while on their missions has led many gay Mormons to continue to assert a religious affiliation long after most others have simply abandoned theirs. Of course, we are certainly not underrepresented in the gay community either.

What has been instructive to me, however, is to see the different patterns into which gay Saints and former members often fall. One category seems to be made up of those who blandly assert that they were once LDS, perhaps that they even served missions, but that they had gotten over it, as if the Church were some sort of stage to be got through in a maturational process. I find their abandonment of the Church troubling (and they often find my continued loyalty to it incomprehensible), but what is most noteworthy is that these are often the men with the most well-adjusted, happy, and stable lives. In contrast, it is often the men who believe most strongly and love the Church most deeply who live the most miserable lives, seeking forgetfulness in the slow suicide of sexual promiscuity and excessive drug use because they still believe deep down that they are damned. I once met one such man because a gay friend—himself not someone who could plausibly be accused of fanatical inflexibility in matters of sexual morality—became so concerned about his friend's activities that he asked whether I, being LDS also, couldn't try to exert a positive influence. When I reluctantly got to know my friend's friend—once a missionary for the Church, now sexually promiscuous and a drug dealer—I was stunned to find that he not only loves the Church deeply and has a strong testimony of the gospel, but that he goes around trying to get people to read the Book of Mormon. (I have seen him do this.) Confused, I asked him once about the evident contradiction between his life and his beliefs. "I know I can never make it to the celestial kingdom because of what I am," he told me, "but I want to make sure that as many other people as possible can get there." At home, later, I cried. And I was glad that it would be left for God rather than for me to judge this man. I wouldn't know how.

My own path down the admittedly bizarre trail I seem to be on has been a much more happy one because of my belief in

myself and in the fundamental morality of my conduct. I have also been fortunate to receive acceptance and support for how I seek to live my life from an unusually wide variety of members of the Church. The only factor I can find that seems to unify my defenders in the Church is that most are people of marked sincerity and spirituality. Their support has considerably eased my process of combining the aspects of my life that it had seemed—and that everyone had told me—it would be impossible to reconcile.

In some cases, support within the Church has come from very surprising sources, including members with reputations for extreme doctrinal conservatism. In the case of at least one of my priesthood leaders, his support clearly came against his will. After sustaining minor injuries in an automobile accident, I had requested a priesthood blessing from this man—a humble man of profound charity, but one who had gently but firmly made clear from the outset his fundamental opposition to the course I had adopted. When this leader laid his hands on my head, however, he blessed me not only that my injuries would heal properly (they did), but that I would one day meet the man who was to be my "companion in this life." It was the only time in my many years in the Church that I have stood after a blessing to see its giver manifestly shocked and horrified. That leader remained shocked and horrified for a very long time, but eventually—a year after the blessing, perhaps—walked up to me after sacrament meeting one Sunday and quietly told me that he hoped I would find my companion.

*Deliver my soul from the sword;  
my darling from the power of the dog.  
Save me from the lion's mouth:*

*for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.*

—PSALM 22:20–21

**O**THER Church members, not surprisingly, are less supportive and find my experiences troubling. These brothers and sisters generally make one of three arguments against what I am doing.

The weakest argument seems to be that I could not view "marriage" to a man as moral because such marriages are not legally recognized. This is certainly a curious argument for Mormons to make in view of the fact that little over a century ago, the Church accepted polygamous marriages that were then not only not legally recognized, but were in fact criminal acts, and that today in South American countries where divorce is not permitted, the Church allows temple sealings of couples who legally are adulterous. Clearly, legality and morality must be separate issues. If not, would it mean that same-sex unions would be moral so long as legally recognized? If that is the case, it is probably only a matter of time. Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland already allow the equivalent of marriages for same-sex couples.

Another argument I often hear is that gay Mormons should simply remain completely celibate and endure to the end, like the single sisters of the Church (no one ever seems to mention single brothers) whose situation is said to be identical to ours.

Perhaps significantly, this argument is not one that has ever been made to me by a single sister. Very much more virtue is being asked of those single sisters (and of their single brethren) than most Church members will ever have to exhibit themselves. One of the most forthright members of my stake's leadership once volunteered, when discussing this issue with me, that he had been able to marry in his early twenties, and that he frankly wasn't entirely sure that he would have been able to maintain his moral standards had he not been able to do so. None of this, of course, alters the fact that at least some straight singles do endure chaste to the end. What I question is the assumption that our situations are truly equivalent. My experience is that they are not.

Singles who are straight and who wish to marry can always maintain hope. Life alone may be lonely and difficult, but the right companion may always be around the next bend in the road. It's never really over. More important, these singles have outlets. Many date, attend Church social functions designed to introduce them to single brothers or sisters in their age group, pursue romantic relationships, and otherwise channel their energies into morally appropriate activities with the opposite sex that still provide a measure of release for some of the pressures that build up.

Gay members are in a different situation. For us, there is officially no hope. We are told that we should expect to be alone until we die. Rather than channeling our instincts and energies into behavior that is morally appropriate but that nevertheless allows some release, we are told that there are no acceptable releases, so that instead the pressures build up and ultimately burst through at whatever point proves weakest. Our energies, rather than being directed at finding a mate, must be directed inward, seeking with all our might to hold in check some of our most fundamental impulses. Such a task requires a vast strength few seem to possess.

I am told that there are gay members of the Church who strive to endure chaste to the end, though their numbers appear very small relative to the proportion of the Mormon (or ex-Mormon) population that is gay. I wish such men and women well. In my own case, in considering whether to rely upon the personal revelation described earlier (which, after all, was not mandatory), I vividly remember weighing the moral possibilities carefully, including that of lifetime celibacy. I recognized that many of the gay Mormons I'd met who had sought to remain celibate had instead ended up in a sort of cycle of celibacy, then a big mistake (often of a fairly sordid kind), and then repentance—a miserable cycle that frequently just seemed to keep repeating itself over and over. For myself, I knew how difficult it was becoming to hold out, and I knew

how close the close calls were getting. It appeared that I stood in danger of entering the same miserable cycle. I concluded that, whatever its absolute morality, the idea of committing to one man and spending my life being loyal to him would be much more moral (and much less sleazy) than what it looked like the alternative would probably turn out to be.

I do not believe that the smallness of the number of gay members of the Church who endure chaste to the end is an outgrowth of a homosexual orientation so much as of the nature of the task we are asked to undertake. I have often wondered what would happen if, for some reason, the Church leadership announced one day to the entire sophomore class at BYU that they were never to seek mates, that they were never in their lives to be allowed any sexual outlet whatsoever, and that they were never to pursue (or even to long for) that particular kind of love that everyone says is of such great worth, but that instead they were to spend their entire lives alone. How many of those students would remain true to the Church and its standards for five years? For ten years? For twenty-five? Those who make the celibacy argument are asking me for another forty. I wonder how many of them could do this themselves.

The irony is that, the way I now live my life, I probably could do it myself. I may have to. I have dated, but I haven't yet found a man with whom I want to spend the rest of my life, and frankly I sometimes wonder whether I will. At such times, I have to contemplate seriously spending the remainder of my life single (which to me means celibate). Actually, the way I live my life now, my situation really is analogous to that of the straight single sisters and brothers. But it is analogous to theirs because (at least on my less cynical days) I have hope for the future and because (even on my more cynical days) I have some outlets. These make a tremendous difference, I have found. Since I've started dating men, my moral standards have actually become easier rather than harder to maintain. The close calls have largely disappeared. I no longer have to worry about the pressure bursting through at the weakest spot because I control when and where that pressure is released.

I am also familiar with the arguments against homosexuality based on biblical passages, as well as with a variety of counter-arguments: that most of the biblical passages in question (except the one in Romans) may actually refer in the original language to the male prostitutes which were a feature of contemporary idol-worship;<sup>3</sup> that it is odd for us to take these particular passages literally when so many other statements in the Bible—Christ's absolute prohibition on divorce except for adultery is a good example—are now reinterpreted to lessen

THOUGH

it would certainly  
make my life vastly  
easier, I can no  
more walk away  
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pretend I do not  
believe it than I  
can pretend that I  
am not gay.



their impact or ignored completely; that the Book of Mormon is strangely silent on the entire question. The issues raised are extremely complex. I do not claim to know the answers.

I do know, however, that arguing about the meaning of scriptures is probably fruitless. My own response, therefore, to those who assert on the basis of scriptural passages that gays are sinful is to point to the story of the woman sinner who washed the feet of Jesus at the house of Simon the Pharisee. (See Luke 7:36–50.) We do not know much about this woman except that her sins were evidently notorious. Uncharacteristically, though, in neither the King James Version nor the Joseph Smith Translation does the Savior tell her to sin no more. Perhaps the statement was simply not recorded; perhaps he knew it to be superfluous. I have often wondered, however, if the Savior might not simply have understood some difficult aspect of the woman's situation. She manifestly had an extraordinarily profound and good soul for someone involved in notorious sins. Might she have been a widow who prostituted herself to keep her children from starving? There certainly were such women at the time. What is most interesting, though, is Christ's response to the carping of the self-righteous Simon. "And Jesus answering said . . . There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?"

*For the kingdom is the Lord's:  
and he is the governor among the nations.*

—PSALM 22:28

**C**LEARLY, a major question for me is what might happen to my Church membership in the event that I find a man with whom I wish to spend the rest of my life. Granted, the long hours I often spend at the office, coupled with my moral code, seem sometimes to have given my homosexuality a rather theoretical quality, but clearly the ultimate object of my dating is to find a companion whom I can love and who can love me in return. In that case, some priesthood leaders have warned me, I may be excommunicated.

Excommunication is something to which I have given much thought, and which I also made the subject of prayer before embarking on the path I now follow. Obviously, what I was hoping for was some sort of promise that nothing would happen, but that was not what I got. Instead, I received the same assurance that if I followed the guidelines from the other revelation, I would not lose my salvation or exaltation; the same assurance that the Lord understood; and the same assurance that everything would be all right in the end; but nothing about the future of my Church membership. Instead, I was told that the actions of others in this regard lay within their stewardship, not mine, and were not an appropriate subject of my prayers. In the most important respect, I guess, I already had the only answer I should need.

That answer, however much comfort it may provide in the religious sphere, nonetheless does little to assuage my concern

that I may be expelled from the organization around which I have built much of my life and which represents to me my primary loyalty. This prospect causes me great concern and great pain. It also tempts me to try to marshal in advance arguments against the taking of such an action—the message it would send that sticking to a moral code like the one I strove to follow had not been worth trying; the irony that it was only because I had remained active that any action was being considered (our stake, at least, does not pursue and excommunicate inactive gay members); that I had done the best I could when nobody had been able to provide me with any better solution that actually worked.

I recognize, however, that these arguments, in the final analysis, are misconceived. Whatever the arguments, pro and con, the decision ultimately rests with God. It is, after all, his church, not mine or even that of its leaders, and both I and they are expected to abide by his decisions. I know (and do not envy) many of the stake leaders who would have to make this decision were I to marry a man and become sexually active with him now. Several are very close friends. I know these men to be devout and sincere. They do not seem like the sort to let either friendship for me on the one hand or prejudices about homosexuality on the other cloud their ability to perceive and act upon God's will, whatever it may be. I only hope that, if and when the time comes, I will stand before men whom I can trust as much as I do the ones set above me now.

And if they do take away my membership, I'll see if they won't let me join our ward choir. They take anyone.

*All they that go down to the dust shall bow before him:  
and none can keep alive his own soul.*

—PSALM 22:29

**I** NEVER resolved in my own mind whether the permission slip revelation, as I now tend to call it, meant that acting within its limits would not constitute sin, or simply that the Lord would forgive certain things, perhaps even in advance. Nor do I try any longer to disentangle the issue. In many respects, the distinction is largely semantic. To the extent that it is not, the issue is rife with theological implications I do not believe it to be my place to resolve.

Nevertheless, I have learned some priceless lessons from my experiences. One was the degree to which they brought home to me a truth many members of the Church (including me) seemed more to mouth than to believe: that in spite of our necessary best efforts, we will still fall short of perfection, and that our salvation and exaltation ultimately depend, in the final analysis, on God's grace. (See 2 Ne. 25:23.) It also caused me to begin to develop compassion for those who fall short—for the first time in my life, really, because I had never myself failed at anything before. Then I sought diligently to overcome homosexuality and failed completely, but God seemed to be saying that he understood. Perhaps, I thought, I should learn to do the same. It was probably ultimately to the good that I underwent these trials, for had it otherwise been possible for me, by some sheer dint of effort or obedience, to obtain a place



ruling some world in the hereafter, I am certain that I would have been a terrible tyrant, exacting of my charges and merciless to those whose efforts proved inadequate. Now I understand better.

My experiences also gave me a much deeper appreciation for the Atonement. A singularly beautiful article by Bruce Hafen, who I hope will not be too appalled to find it quoted here, helped me put my experiences into perspective.<sup>4</sup> Christ's atonement, Elder Hafen wrote, brought healing not only for sin, but for all suffering and bitterness and inadequacy—the "beauty for ashes" the Messiah would bestow on those who mourn in Zion, as foreseen by the prophet Isaiah. If we love the Lord with all our hearts, Brother Hafen seemed to promise, not only would he be "aware of our limitations, but . . . he will also in due course compensate for them, 'after all we can do.'" The Atonement, he wrote, is "a success that can compensate when we cannot, after we conscientiously do all we can." This has come to be the framework in which I view my own trials and the Lord's response. It has also turned my own abstract appreciation of the Atonement into something I feel with deep emotion. I used to have trouble concentrating during the sacrament prayers. Now, when I hear them and contemplate the Savior's sacrifice, I have trouble holding back the tears because I feel that, in small part, he did what he did in order to give me the opportunity for a full and decent life.

*They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.*

—PSALM 22:31

I HAD often wondered in years past why it was that Christ on the cross would have despaired and accused God of having forsaken him. It was not until I read the biography of Christ by the Japanese Roman Catholic writer Shusaku Endo that I learned that Christ's apparently despairing cry was actually the opening line of the twenty-second psalm, and that this psalm, far from being despairing, is in reality a moving reaffirmation of faith amidst suffering. For this reason I chose it as the framework for this piece.

My experiences have served to deepen my faith in God and my love of him. I know that he stood by me at every stage of my trials. I know now as never before that he can provide peace in troubled lives and hope and redemption in lives that seemed hopeless and doomed. I know from experience that if we love and trust him he can ameliorate problems and catastrophes to which there appear to be no solutions. And I still believe in miracles. ☞

#### NOTES

1. Irina Ratushinskaya, *Grey Is the Color of Hope* (New York: Vintage International, 1989).

2. Nien Cheng, *Life and Death in Shanghai* (New York: Grove Press, 1986).

3. See John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

4. Bruce C. Hafen, "Beauty for Ashes. The Atonement of Jesus Christ," *Ensign*, April 1990. The quotations appear on pages 8 and 13, respectively.



#### SPACE EXPLORER

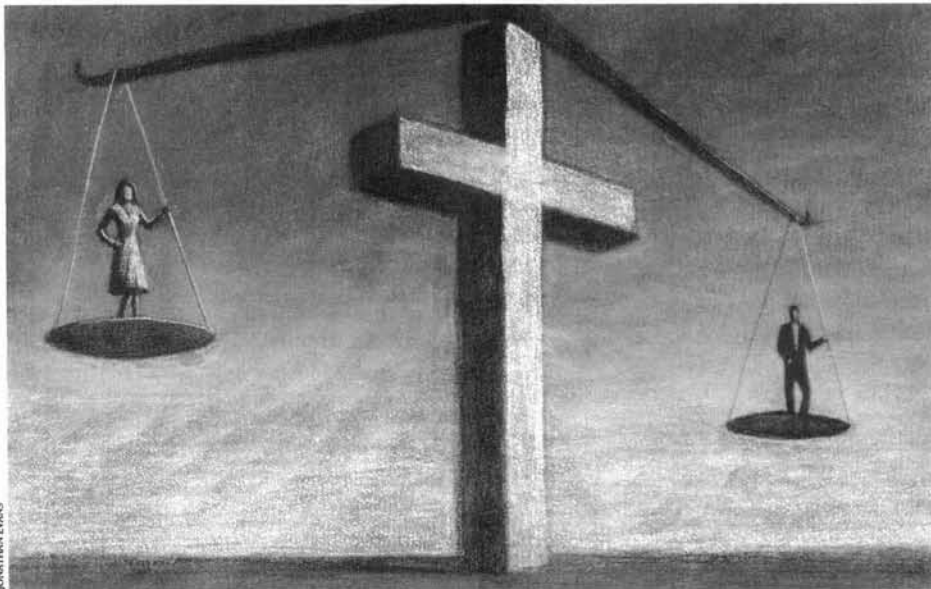
go down a long dark hallway  
with a lamp  
held out in front of you  
and revel in the way  
darkness and its shadow angels  
fall away from you  
like ignorance  
as each door,  
every stretch of floorboard  
or wall or ceiling  
opens up its brilliant confession,  
all that it is  
snapping clean and true  
in the flame  
of your curiosity  
and gather up these facts,  
these impressions  
like scattered fruit  
in the deep barrels  
of your understanding,  
onward and onward  
without fear,  
even as the oil  
shrinks to nothing  
in the bottom of your lamp  
and the light flickers  
and eventually dies  
and the darkness returns,  
arrogant as ever

—JOHN GREY

## GIVE AND TAKE

THIRTEEN FAVORABLE  
CONSEQUENCES OF  
ORDAINING WOMEN

By M. Scott Fisher



*Despite the current firm resistance of the Church, I think the ordination of women is more viable than we may realize. We have a strong theological basis for asserting the equality of all persons and considerable institutional flexibility.*

## INTRODUCTION

*Growing up as an active male in the LDS church, I have been comforted by knowing I could invoke the priesthood to bless my child.*

*Every parent and every child deserves that same comfort.*

THE WINTER Edna Corn Arrington was pregnant with her fourth child, the 1918–19 influenza epidemic struck Twin Falls County, Idaho, hard. The entire family was stricken; one daughter

died, the father hovered between life and death, and the baby, a one-and-a-half-year-old boy, contracted pneumonia on top of the flu. The overworked doctor told Brother Arrington that the child could not live more than twenty-four hours and warned Sister Arrington not to expend her little remaining strength in trying to save him; pregnant women were particularly susceptible to the killing disease. Acting in love and faith, Sister Arrington and Hannah Bowen, a Relief Society volunteer nurse who had recently

moved there from Tooele, anointed and blessed the infant as they had been taught to do in their Relief Society. He was Leonard J. Arrington, later LDS Church Historian.<sup>1</sup>

Two generations later, another mother, married to an inactive priesthood holder, woke to find her son, who suffered severe croup attacks, struggling to breathe. She carried him into the bathroom and turned on the shower, hoping the steam would help, while someone called the ambulance. But the steam wasn't helping, and he was turning blue.

My son was sitting on the toilet seat and I sat in front of him on the bathtub edge. Suddenly, in a natural, instantaneous response, I laid my hands on his head and said, "As E\_\_\_'s mother, I call on the power of the Melchizedek Priesthood . . ." and I blessed him. I had always prayed desperately for him during these attacks, but this was the first time I had ever laid my hands on him and invoked the priesthood. While I was speaking, his head slipped forward from under my hands and fell on my lap. He was asleep!<sup>2</sup>

Growing up as an active male in the LDS church, I have been comforted by knowing that in similar situations I could invoke the priesthood to bless my child. Every parent and every child deserves that same comfort. We feel the joy and relief of the mother with the asthmatic child. Each of us who has heard Leonard Arrington speak, read his works, or been influenced by the historians he has trained feels the poignancy of the doctor's dismissiveness and the strength of Edna Arrington and Hannah Bowen. However, only 20.9 percent of Mormon families in the United States fit the traditional profile of a temple-married couple with children in the home.<sup>3</sup> And even in such homes, many husbands are absent on business or in the service. The benefits of equal access to priesthood blessings by hundreds of thousands of women and children—who are as deserving as those in homes with active priesthood holders—become even more apparent in light of these statistics.

Yet empowering Mormon mothers to act authoritatively in calling down blessings of health on their children is only one of the positive consequences of women's ordination to priesthood. As I have thought soberly and realistically about this controversial and sensitive topic, I have seen many ways in which women's ordination would positively influence individuals, the Church, and even the world.

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*Empowering Mormon mothers to act authoritatively in calling down blessings of health on their children is only one of the positive consequences of women's ordination to priesthood.*

I regret that this topic is controversial and seen by many as the domain of women and general authorities. The issue of ordination concerns men as much as women. Men obviously have the power to do something about it and, less obviously, have much to gain from the change.

A PERSONAL ODYSSEY

*I have come to believe that it is important to state what I genuinely think, feel, and see.*

FOR many years, I thought little about the issue of women's ordination. When I did, I dismissed the topic quickly as one of balance: Did not God assign priesthood to men so that they could develop the gifts that women had naturally? The turning point came when I responded to an invitation to write an article on the use of authority in Church settings.<sup>4</sup> When I began thinking systemically about priesthood, I realized I could not defend the exclusion of women from such authority: men and women are too tightly woven together in life's tapestry.

It was a paradigm shift. The benefits of ordaining Mormon women to the priesthood overwhelmed me. I have spent the intervening months reading widely on related topics, discussing the matter intensively with thoughtful people both in and out of the Church, and making it the matter of private meditation and prayer. My first insight has been consistently and repeatedly confirmed. Continued study and contemplation have yielded only greater clarity and certainty. I gain more peace daily regarding the positive consequences of women's ordination.

Why am I sharing this private inspiration? Two experiences illustrate my motivations: In my Detroit ward in the 1960s, an African-American brother served as Sunday School secretary. He worked on his records while the rest of us went to priesthood meeting. I became uncomfortable walking past him every Sunday morning on the way to my high priests group. I genuinely yearned for his full participation as a brother in all aspects of the Church, but especially in priesthood meeting. So I determined, along with a friend who felt as I did, to write a letter to Church leaders expressing our feelings and respectfully requesting a change in policy.

But I never wrote that letter. When I mentioned the idea to my father, he said it would be crazy to write such a letter. I was working for the Church Educational System at the time, and I simply lost my nerve. When I related this experience to a general authority a couple of years later, but prior to the 1978 revelation, I wondered aloud if such a letter could have done any good. He said, "It might have!"

In the second experience, Elder Bruce R. McConkie, then a member of the First Council of the Seventy, endeared himself to me forever when he spoke at the Salt Lake Institute in 1966 and cited an Old Testament story that had escaped my attention. When Moses was meeting with the "seventy elders" he had chosen, they prophesied under the influence of the Spirit. Two of their number were still in the camp, not with Moses, but the Spirit also touched them and they prophesied. When a young man came running with the news, Joshua exclaimed, "Moses, my lord, stop them!" The record continues: "But Moses replied, 'Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!'" (Num. 11:26-29, New International Version.) The message of Brother McConkie's remarks was that we should all speak as we are moved to do so. I also note now and appreciate the fact that Moses said, at least in this English translation, "all the Lord's people," not "all the Lord's men."

I now see my earlier hesitation as insensitivity and a lack of courage. In this essay, I say what I think and see and feel according to how I have been touched about making God's blessings available to all of his children—daughters and sons.

THIRTEEN POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES OF ORDAINING WOMEN TO THE PRIESTHOOD

THE list that follows comes from my observations and experiences as a husband and father, an active Church member with many callings, including leadership capacities, and my work as a consulting psychologist trying to maximize the effectiveness and personal growth of individuals and groups.

1. ORGANIZATIONAL EQUALITY

The first and greatest advantage of ordaining women to the priesthood is to make them structurally equal with men in exercising personal priesthood authority, equal in growth opportunities, and equal in access to administrative offices in the Church. The Book of Mormon tells us emphatically, "All are alike unto God"—and then categorizes the most obvious groups of differentiated humanity to stress that God sees no such differences: "black and white, bond and free, *male and female*." (2 Ne. 26:33.) God is concerned with fairness and justice—and, hence, with equality. Equality is an irreducible value; the most powerful mechanism the Church has to make women equal to men is to give them the voice of priesthood authority.

After Rosa Parks's refusal to give up her bus seat triggered a two-month bus boycott, negotiations for a compromise slowly bared the unacceptable assumptions underlying segregated seating. It became evident to the organizers that the solution did not lie in negotiating more seats for blacks or finding an answer to questions like "What if a black man sat next to a white woman and their knees touched?" Instead, they decided to press for an end to discriminatory seating laws. When people were given their basic rights, the freedom of equality, then the principle was simple: "People could sit anywhere there was a seat."<sup>5</sup>

We might ask, "What would it be like if anyone could give a blessing, be a bishop, or be Primary president?" I think it would be like it was in Jesus' church.<sup>6</sup> A change of policy would not change attitudes in the Church overnight any more than attitudes in Montgomery, Alabama, changed immediately. But forty years later, attitudes have changed. In the meantime, those who were discriminated against have increasingly enjoyed the blessings of freedom and the exercise of their basic human rights. Changing the priesthood policy won't suddenly solve all of the problems of discrimination, insult, and abuse that women sometimes receive in the Church—witness the experience of RLDS women<sup>7</sup>—but it will help. Ordination will build a better bridge over which we can pass to address other structural problems; meanwhile, it will make all of the gifts accessible to all who might benefit from them.



## 2. DEBUNKING HARMFUL MAN-MADE JUSTIFICATIONS

The ordination of women would eliminate the harmful justifications of exclusion, a pattern that parallels folk beliefs that evolved to justify the exclusion of blacks from the priesthood. A friend who is both faithful and brilliant found himself speechless when his six-year-old asked why she would not be able to hold the priesthood. Painfully, he realized that every answer he thought of but one would send a message of inferiority. The most honest and the most helpful answer he could give her was to say, "We don't know why women cannot hold the priesthood." I take particular umbrage at two damaging and illogical arguments currently used against ordaining women. The first is the easy formula: men have priesthood and women have motherhood. This argument seriously damages men as well as women. It makes either fatherhood or priesthood a consolation prize and denigrates both. As a father, I would never choose "priesthood" over "fatherhood," nor would I consider priesthood more important than fatherhood. Elder M. Russell Ballard took a valuable small step toward eliminating this equation by pointing out, in the General Relief Society Meeting on 25 September 1993, that men have "priesthood and the responsibilities of fatherhood" while women are assigned only "the responsibilities of motherhood."<sup>8</sup> Still, the fact that many experience pain at this illogical comparison should not go unnoticed.

A second damaging and fallacious argument is that the prayer of faith is fully effica-

cious in healing; therefore, devout women don't need the priesthood. This argument detracts from our faith that priesthood can be a power in our lives beyond its use in such ordinances as baptism and confirmation. If priesthood is useful for men in calling on the powers of heaven, then it would certainly be useful for women as well. Ordination—and eliminating the need for illogical rationalizations—could make the priesthood more powerful for all.

## 3. REMOVING MESSAGES OF WOMEN'S INFERIORITY

The ordination of women would lessen, and in some cases eliminate, the message of inferiority frequently sent to women in the Church. For example, in one ward a successful ongoing service program was designed by both men and women; however, the bishop referred to the program in a public meeting as having been developed by "the priesthood." (When the omission was called to his attention, he promptly corrected himself.)

More blatantly, women's opinions are dismissed, and they are told they cannot perceive and interpret facts as well as men. Veda Anderson, a friend and one of the most able people I know, once summarized her experience with men in the Church: "I'm always wrong because I am a woman." Veda holds a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Michigan and is former president of the National Kidney Foundation. My experience is consistent with hers. Mormon men frequently do not listen to the ideas of women

as seriously as they listen to those of men. And because a woman's leaders are all ultimately male priesthood holders, women are rendered unequal, less powerful, and inferior; their voices are weakened by this unequal treatment and the separation and injury that it imposes.

A friend who is as psychologically healthy as any human being I know says, "I don't have the priesthood because God hasn't revealed it. Maybe it's because I'm not worthy or can't handle it in God's opinion. God didn't give me the priesthood. I'm inferior in his eyes." *It is the denial itself that is damaging to her.* When a woman sees herself as theologically inferior, she will lack strength in social self-assertion. If she wants to assert her opinion, she may hesitate, paralyzed by questions like, "Am I just being selfish? Shouldn't I be more self-sacrificing?" If she yields to such questions, she diminishes her self-esteem by diminishing her voice, and she must deal with the resultant guilt and frustration of her silence herself. In my opinion, buttressed by my professional observations, *self-silencing always diminishes self-esteem and increases perceptions of inferiority.*

In a tragic reversal of the heroic story of Helaman's warriors, who expressed their faith in the words given to them by their mothers (see Alma 57:46-48), we learn through a Harvard study of adolescents by Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan that American girls are taught to relinquish their voices, not by men but by older women—often by their mothers. The systematic stifling of the female voice in and out of the Church produces in me simultaneous feelings of grief and anger. Brown and Gilligan wrote:

It was with a sense of shock and then a deep, knowing sadness that we listened to the voices of the girls tell us that it was adult women in their lives that provided the models for silencing themselves. . . . We wept. Then . . . we could recall the controlling, silencing women with clarity and rage, but we could also gratefully recall the women who had allowed our disagreement and rambunctiousness in their presence and who made us feel whole.<sup>9</sup>

The tendency for self-silencing is endemic in the organizations I work with and no less frequent or less present in Church settings. The Church could do much to remove this damaging cultural "fact of life." That women acquiesce in being silenced is not evidence of a healthy system; rather, it is evidence of how thoroughly they have been trained and often



"It says, 'Stop going to R-rated movies.'"

*That women acquiesce in being silenced is not evidence of a healthy system; rather, it is evidence of how thoroughly they have been trained and often damaged by millennia of unequal treatment.*

damaged by millennia of unequal treatment. As Gerda Lerner has pointed out, "The structuring of society in such a way that women were for millennia excluded from the creation of the cultural product has more decisively disadvantaged women in their economic and political rights than any other factor."<sup>10</sup> If women had the priesthood, the absence of women's voices in the decision-making process at all levels and in leadership handbooks would be ameliorated.

#### 4. BETTER DECISIONS FROM MORE PERSPECTIVES

The Church needs the vitality and strength that comes from women's voices. The Church would benefit by bringing the gifts of women into the public arena. A substantial body of current research suggests that men and women often speak for different values and perspectives in open discussions. Men tend to focus on the values of separateness, autonomy, status, rules, hierarchy, and accomplishment. Maintaining these institutional markers gives them much of their identity. Women tend to focus on relationships, connectedness, and care-giving. Much of their identity comes through these processes.<sup>11</sup> When there are problems, if we listen to both women and men, we will hear both voices, to the benefit of all.

#### 5. IMPROVED GENDER COMMUNICATION

Women's ordination would help men and women communicate more freely with each other. The problem of gender-related communication is certainly not one on which Mormons have a monopoly, but the rigidity and exclusiveness of Mormon patriarchal structures exacerbate both the cultural manifestations and their consequences. In my work with groups, I have found that unequal status almost always makes communication within the group more difficult and seriously limits the ability of the group to become a cohesive unit.<sup>12</sup> Alice Eagly, writing on *Gender and Social Influence*, reports differential influence between men and women in the family as a result of the higher status that men ordinarily have in organizations. She quotes psychologist Stanley Milgrom: "The individual higher in the hierarchy is believed to have the right to exert influence by virtue of his or her position . . . and the individual lower in the

hierarchy is believed to have the obligation to comply with the demands that are made."<sup>13</sup> Disadvantaging women in this way has negative effects on the husband-wife relationship and the family.

#### 6. IMPROVED MARRIAGE PARTNERSHIP

If women were ordained equally, husbands and wives would feel a stronger and sweeter sense of equality in their partnership. We would bless each other more. It's hard for a woman or a man to ask for a blessing when the request bears within it implications of inferiority and dependence. Equality in ordination would also contribute to the quality of parent-child relationships. Wives have not been able to participate freely in giving children parents' blessings. This exclusion has damaged mothers and daughters. What does the daughter sense when her mother can't give her a desired blessing? What does it teach her about her voice, about herself as a woman? The limitation of parental blessings to fathers has, I believe, helped fathers create special bonds with their children, but the inclusion of the mother would not weaken those bonds. How has the present practice contributed to special bonds between mothers and daughters? Spiritual leadership in the home is a joyful responsibility, yet hundreds of men feel burdened and "nagged" by it. Sharing the burden would draw husband and wife closer together in mutual blessing and would provide a model of equality for the children.

#### 7. STRENGTHENED SINGLE PARENTS

The ordination of women would strengthen the hundreds of thousands of LDS women who are or who will be single parents. Knowing that they can bless their children, dedicate their homes, and ask for revelation, women will feel a reduction in the disorientation, intimidation, fear, and inadequacies that frequently accompany single parenthood. When a woman has felt dependent upon a husband—often a negligent or even an unfaithful one—for spiritual leadership for herself and her children, when she feels that his priesthood provides significant security and protection, then its removal through death or divorce can be bewildering. The message and the injustice belittle and damage the woman. Transferring that depen-

dence to a home teacher or a busy bishop can be humiliating, especially if the woman is somehow blamed in the event of a divorce. Nowhere is our unequal treatment of women more evident than in withholding from single women and mothers the blessings of priesthood.

#### 8. GREATER RECOGNITION OF THE FEMININE DIVINE

If women were ordained, both men and women would benefit wonderfully by more readily recognizing and validating aspects of the feminine divine. Women would become more sensitive to their identification with the feminine divine in them. Women's having the priesthood would affirm the partnership of the feminine in the divine, or women's equality in the creative process, and confirm for women their share in the divine nature.

I also see ordination as performing the equally valuable function of making men more cognizant of feminine aspects in a divinity, of relating to a Heavenly Mother, and of accepting "feminine" aspects in themselves. They can be more fully themselves, accept and increase all positive dimensions of their selves, and be free from the implied and stated superiority that goes with male-only priesthood. What is wanted is not for men and women to be the same, but for men to be both sensitive *and* strong, and for women to be as strong as they are sensitive.

#### 9. PRIESTHOOD RESPONSIBILITIES WOULD BE SHARED

Men would also benefit directly from sharing the responsibility for ecclesiastical duties. Although men have benefitted psychologically and emotionally from the status and visibility of Church leadership (as well as spiritually from broader opportunities to serve), such duties can also weigh heavily as a burden, especially in time spent away from families. Ecclesiastical leadership is an area men and women can share and feel good about. Neither would be usurping; neither would be dominating, as we share in decision-making, question-asking, and answer-knowing.

10. PROTECTION AGAINST SEXUAL ABUSE  
Ordination would enhance women's ability to protect themselves and their daughters

against sexual abuse in the home. Although women's ordination to the priesthood would not stop marital rape, wife-battering, or emotional abuse, it would help to eliminate the patriarchal male's rationale: "Do what I say; I have the priesthood." It would also, by reducing structural inferiority, make women more assertive and less codependent in abusive situations.

In the case of incest and child sexual abuse, the present patriarchal structure leaves young women clearly more vulnerable than young men to seduction and abuse from parents and relatives.<sup>14</sup> If the perpetrator holds a priesthood calling, the victim's powerlessness is increased, and her ability to take steps to stop the abuse is minimized. Shared priesthood would help to change the power relationship from one of inequality and implied inferiority to one in which the priesthood itself would be a force protecting the safety of women and children.

#### 11. FEWER CASES OF ECCLESIASTICAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Women's ordination would reduce the incidence of sexual exploitation by Church officers. Bishops who are required by policy to conduct "searching interviews" of the sexual behavior of all of the young women in a ward are constantly exposed to temptations of voyeurism or worse. Not all bishops can resist this temptation, and the more "righteous" the girl, the more compliant she is likely to be to show her good faith and cooperation. Adult women can also be victimized in interview situations. With women's ordination,

the interview process could readily change so that men could conduct the interviews of men, and women could do the same for women.<sup>15</sup>

Women, especially young women, should not be expected to go to men with sexual issues. Men who don't see this problem might ask themselves how comfortable they would feel discussing sexual issues with the Relief Society president, or if they would like the Young Women's president asking their son about his sexual experiences. A couple having marital difficulty could seek counseling from the Church authority, male or female, with whom they feel most comfortable. Zion, as well as the home, would be a safer place if women had the priesthood.

#### 12. GREATER SELF-ESTEEM AMONG YOUNG WOMEN

Young women would particularly benefit from priesthood ordination through the increase in feelings of dignity and self-worth. Equality in priesthood ordination would significantly impact the rising rates of inactivity among young Mormon women, now higher than the inactivity rates among young men of the same age.<sup>16</sup> I believe these young women are going elsewhere for what they need. Ordination would communicate, instantly and directly, a powerful message about their value.

Ordaining young women to the Aaronic priesthood would reduce sexism, gender stereotypes, and the lack of respect for girls and women evinced by far too many teenage boys. A young man would have a different at-

titude toward a young woman if he sat next to her at the sacrament table. Boys would be more likely to stop their callous assertions that they are better than girls, reduce their efforts to subordinate them, and indulge in less sexual objectification.

#### 13. AN ENSIGN OF EQUALITY

Women's ordination would provide a divinely inspired model for the world—one that recognizes the full status and worthiness of womanhood. Held up against this standard, a whole range of humiliating, destructive, and debasing cultural practices would be even less defensible. Professional limitations, impingements on speech, genital mutilation, murder, and infanticide are ongoing atrocities. Thousands of women live in physical, mental, and/or spiritual degradation, simply because they are female. How can we refuse to take any step that might help to reduce such monstrous evil?

A chilling consequence of subjugating women is that men have learned the pleasures of domination. When men can regard their mothers, their wives, and their daughters as inferiors, it is easy for them to subjugate and dehumanize other men and whole groups. I believe that peace between men and nations will be first facilitated by peace, justice, and equality between men and women.

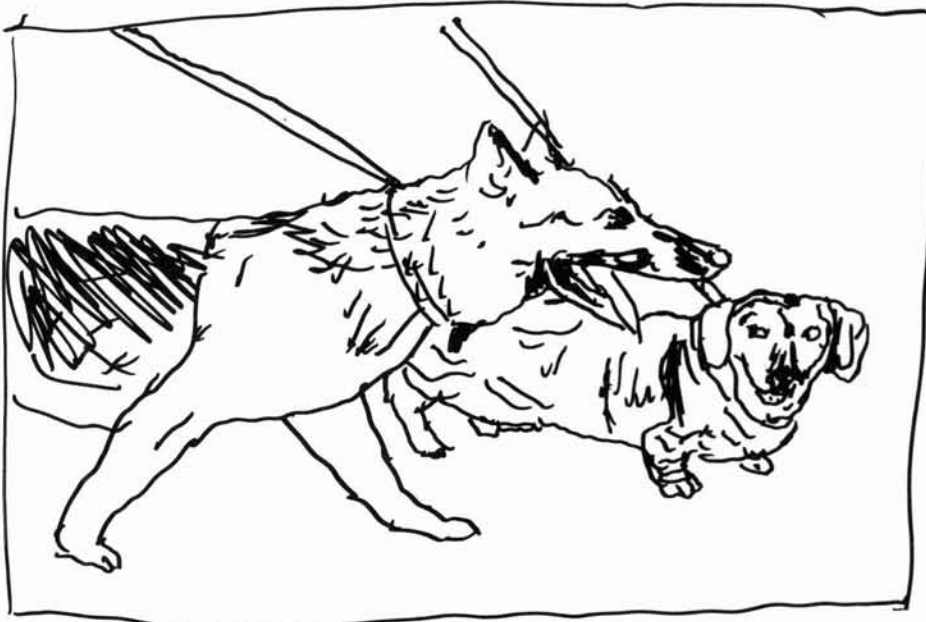
This prospect may seem grandiose, but the goals of the restored Church have always been large in their purposes. And there is power in a minority. It is thrilling to contemplate the good that could be done if the Church could lead the fight for the right to decent life. The Church can be a powerful influence beyond what its numbers indicate, and a message of equality between men and women would greatly expand its message of hope.

#### MECHANISMS OF CHANGE

*The ordination of women is more viable than we may realize.*

**H**OW reasonable is it to assume that ordination for Mormon women is a possibility? Despite the current firm resistance of Church leadership and much of the membership, I think it is more viable than we may realize. We have a strong theological basis for asserting the equality of all persons, and considerable institutional flexibility.

The model of the 1978 revelation granting priesthood to all worthy males is a strong one. President Gordon B. Hinckley, speaking at the 1985 women's meeting, sug-



*"My owner's a Mormon. We're going to be together forever."*



gested such a model:

All of us rejoice in the enlargement of opportunities for women. Under the law, there are few opportunities afforded to men that are not now also open to women. With this enlargement of opportunity, a few Latter-day Saint women are asking why they are not entitled to hold the priesthood. To that I can say that only the Lord, through revelation, could alter that situation. He has not done so, so it is profitless for us to speculate and worry about it.<sup>17</sup>

Although this approach does not encourage members to pray for such a revelation, it does not assert that priesthood is denied to women because of their eternal nature or because of eternal law, both positions that would be much harder to modify.<sup>18</sup>

If there is the will to change and the goodwill to accommodate the discomfort inherent in any transition, the ordination of women will proceed more smoothly than we may envision. With some trepidation, I sent this manuscript to my wife's selfless and sweet (Ronald Reagan Republican-conservative) mother. She responded, "I am not comfortable with the idea of women in the clergy, but I guess that's just what I'm used to. It's custom." And quietly, at the age of eighty-eight, she assumes, as she has for all of her adult life, that her temple endowment conferred priesthood upon her. She is not an advocate for women's ordination to the priesthood, but she describes what may be the largest part of the problem—our need to remain within our comfort zone.

The dialogue about women and the priesthood has already begun. It is probable, given the time we are in, that it will continue and increase—among women, among men, in mixed-gender groups, in families, and in councils. I would suggest, first, that all parties try to speak without rhetorical posturing and, second, that we focus on issues rather than on whether we have a right to have issues. As committed members of the Church, we have the right to explore our thoughts mutually with any who wish to listen and/or participate, "that all may be edified of all." (See D&C 88:122.) We should be able to articulate our beliefs without suspicion or criticism. Most of us who have consecrated ourselves and our talents accept our responsibility to be anxiously engaged where the way is not always clear. (See D&C 58:26–27.) We belong to a church that believes that any impingement on free speech comes of evil. (See D&C 98:6–10.) I hope that discussion

will go forward and be respected in that spirit. Gender equality is one of the central issues of our time. It is no less relevant or less important in the Church and deserves our most careful attention and discussion.

#### CONCLUSION

*Ordaining women would enhance our relationship with God.*

**T**HE ordination of women would enhance the caring, love, justice, and mercy in our relationships with each other and with God. It would help us all to be more capable of finding deity, of finding deity in each other, and of nurturing the divine within ourselves. Contemplating the issue of women's ordination has had this effect for me, and has been an important step in building my relationship with God.

Not only are the benefits of female ordination utterly compelling in benefiting women, but there are also equally compelling consequences for men, for children, for the Church, and for the larger community. ☐

#### NOTES

1. Leonard J. Arrington, "The Role of Women in Mormon History," address delivered at the Northeast Sunstone Symposium, Boston, November 1993 (audiotape available, tape order #NE93-001); supplemented by personal conversation.
2. Quoted anonymously in Betina Lindsey, "Woman As Healer in the Modern Church," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 23 (fall 1990): 63. This woman's bishop had counseled her "to call upon the power of the Melchizedek Priesthood to bless my family and those whom I loved and served."
3. Tim B. Heaton, fig. 16, "Vital Statistics," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991), 1533.
4. M. Scott Fisher, "By Virtue of Authority: A Bishop's Perspective," *Exponent II* 17 (1993): 5.
5. See Taylor Branch's chapter, "The Montgomery Bus Boycott," in his *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954–63* (New York: Touchstone, 1988), 129–63.
6. I continue to come across sources that indicate the involvement of women in priesthood duties in the early church. See Karen Jo Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of Their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993).
7. William D. Russell and two RLDS women, Carolyn McCracken and Jean Danielson, ordained to the priesthood in that church, reported the impact of women's ordination in a session at the 1993 Chicago Sunstone Symposium, 23 Oct. 1993 ("Women and the Priesthood—The RLDS Experience" [tape order #CH93-007]). Despite hopeful and healthy developments, there is much continuing bias against women among the leadership and the membership of the RLDS church.
8. M. Russell Ballard, "Equality through Diversity," *Ensign* Nov. 1993, 90.
9. Lyn Mickel Brown and Carol Gilligan, *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992), 221, emphasis is added.
10. Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy* (Oxford University Press, 1993), 272.
11. In addition to the sources cited elsewhere in this essay, I would also recommend Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) and her *The Creation of Feminine Consciousness*; Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (1982; reprint ed., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); and Carol Tarvis, *The Mismeasure of Women: Why Women Are Not the Better Sex, the Inferior Sex, or the Opposite Sex* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992). For a dramatic treatment of the same subject, see Carol Lynn Pearson's performance, video, or published script of *Mother*

*Wave the Morning*, available at 1384 Cornwall Court, Walnut Creek, CA 94596 (510/906-8835).

12. See the chapter on "Techno-Structural Strategies of Social Intervention" in *Social Intervention: A Behavioral Science Approach*, ed. Harvey A. Hornstein, et al. (New York: Free Press, 1971).

13. Alice H. Eagly, "Gender and Social Influence," *American Psychologist* (Sept. 1983): 971–72. The Milgrom quotation is on 971.

14. I acknowledge and lament the rates of abuse against boys, and also acknowledge that adult women are also sometimes sexual abusers of both male and female children. The focus of my concern, however, is that victims are overwhelmingly female and perpetrators overwhelmingly male.

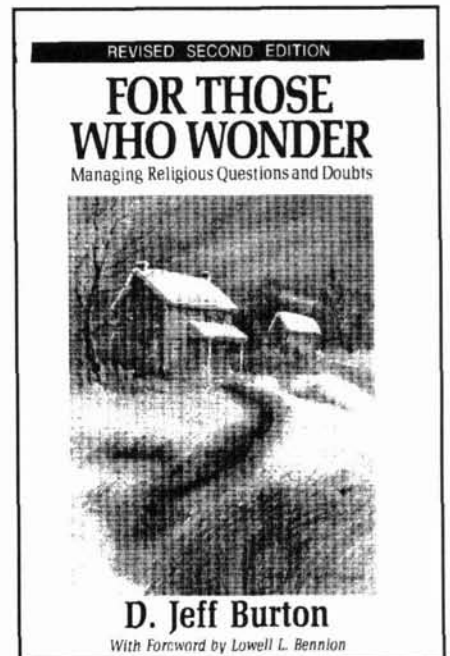
15. I also urgently recommend that "worthiness" interviews shift from the "checklist" approach, which is inherently intrusive and sexually explicit, to a broader-based discussion format in which the emphasis is on supportiveness which will prevent use of priesthood authority in any way that is the least bit coercive (see D&C 121) or invades a person's privacy.

16. According to a 1991 study released by Church headquarters in August 1992, only 32 percent of boys baptized at age eight go on to serve missions at age nineteen. Mark Hurst, assistant to Elder Jack H. Goasland, general Young Men's president, commented, "The data could be generalized for the young women—it's very similar. In fact, data show that the number of young men remaining active is slightly higher." Hurst said this was the first time statistics had indicated the Church was losing more young women than men (Brian Kagel, "Church Losing Youths, Report Says," *Daily Universe*, 31 August 1992, 1).

17. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Ten Gifts from the Lord," *Ensign* Nov. 1985, 86.

18. See Eugene England's address, "No Respector of Persons: A Mormon Ethics of Diversity," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27 (winter 1994): 79–100.

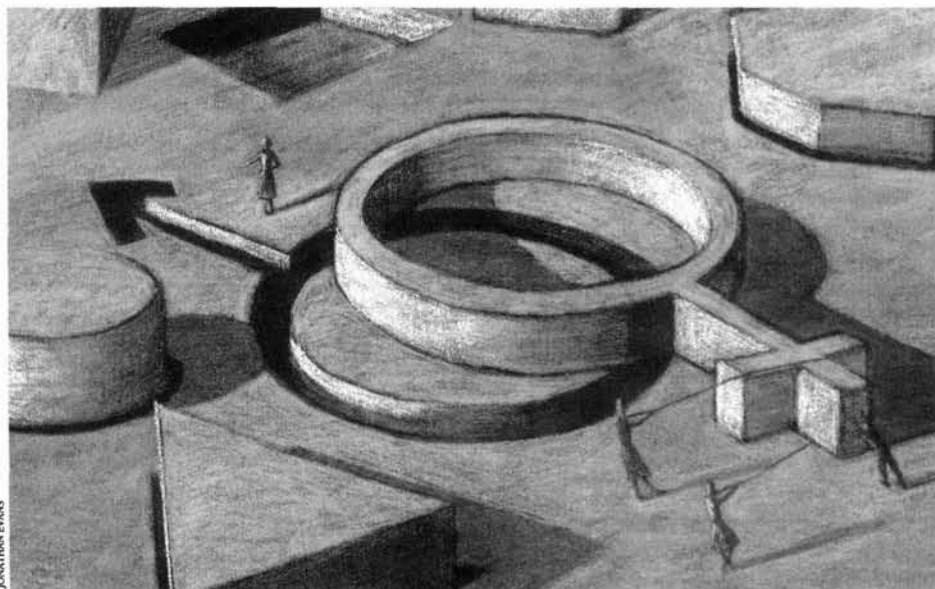
## THIRD EDITION



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# MOVING BEYOND THE PRIESTHOOD DEBATE: WOMEN'S AND MEN'S MODELS OF SPIRITUALITY

By Karen Farb Tullis



*I have no doubt that ordination to the priesthood would be very affirming for women, but I question whether the priesthood as it is currently defined and practiced will ultimately empower them.*

IN THE APRIL 1992 general conference, Chieko Okazaki spoke about connections between people. To illustrate her point, she made a "cat's cradle"—a horizontal crisscross pattern—out of string, a symbol of people vitally connected to one another. The space between the strings, she said, represents Christ's love, which allows the pattern to occur. I was intrigued by this familiar, yet novel illustration—a horizontal pattern of connection. And while I was relieved that the pattern she used was horizontal—as it resonates with my experience—part of me was expecting her to turn the cat's cradle on its side, making it into a vertical pattern. The cat's cradle turned on

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edge is "Jacob's ladder"—a more typical model in our church for both our relationships with each other and with God.

Sister Okazaki's example demonstrates a model of relationship that is non-hierarchical—but equally and vitally connected. It also brings to light some different notions of what it is to be in relationship to both God and each other, while an expectation of the ladder highlights the constant pressure on women and men to tell stories and use examples that support a hierarchical view of relationships. This hierarchical view comes from the structure of the priesthood—the governing and ecclesiastical body of the church.

The models we use to explain our relationships with each other and with God have an impact on our understanding of these relationships. I believe that this story demonstrates some basic differences between women's and men's experiences of relation-

ship, authority, power, spiritual growth, and definition of self. Most, if not all of the metaphors in our religion (save the ones used by Sister Okazaki) and the tradition it was born of have been conceptualized by men. When only one model is presented, it is experienced as and thought to be the only way. Yet when another model is introduced, what was once thought of as the only reality becomes merely one possibility.

What happens internally to a person when his or her experiences, thoughts, and ideas do not fit the espoused models, metaphors, or ideals? All of us have had experiences of trying to measure up to a model or an ideal—as parents, spouses, students, professionals, missionaries, Mormons, sports enthusiasts—and we have all tried various strategies to deal with the inevitable misfit. Some try to force their experiences to fit the model. But thoughts, ideas, and experiences that don't fit may split off from the psyche, and, depending upon how painful the misfit, conscious or unconscious feelings of guilt may result. Some may simply try very hard to ignore whatever doesn't fit, while others may invent ways to make their experiences fit and still feel okay about leaving the parts that don't fit unexplained. Some reject the notion of prototypes altogether, claiming that they aren't based on any one person's real life. Still others may find that the model is just that—one model and not the reality—and may look for another way of doing things. When it comes to our spiritual life and understanding, should we simply ignore areas that don't fit the currently espoused model? Or should we take these opportunities to explore ourselves, our spirituality, and our relationships with each other and with God?

The question of how we as individuals deal with spiritual models and prototypes applies to all of us in the Church. We all have very personal spiritual experiences, and at the same time we are confronted with specifically defined notions of spirituality. These notions, which I feel generally reflect male experience, must be scrutinized if we are to incorporate female members' spiritual experiences. And the Church's expansion to many non-Western and non-industrialized peoples will further impel us to understand the Western, male roots of many of our theological models and practices. In this article, I will concentrate on how women's metaphors and models may not necessarily fit the currently espoused notions of spirituality and priesthood.

I have no doubt that if women and men are ever going to think of each other as equals within the Church, it will be as a result of women receiving the priesthood. I also have no doubt that ordination will be

*Abraham was willing to kill his son for the principle of obedience;  
Hannah's obedience included negotiation with the Lord.*

very affirming for women, who will finally think of themselves as equals to the men who have stood in authority over them all of their lives. I question, however, whether the priesthood as it is currently defined and practiced will ultimately empower women. I fear that instead of being empowered, women would again find a mold they have not created but into which they would have to fit. Priesthood, as the power of God, has been defined in practice and theory by men since both the proverbial and literal Adam. Men have created a language to describe it, rituals to pass it on, and norms for its practice. And naturally, they have created this language, practice, and theology out of *their* experience—their bodies, their lives, their relationships, their constructions of reality, and their understandings of spirituality.

After Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery aggressively sought and then received the priesthood, they in turn gave it to other men. Joseph and Oliver had the power, authority, and influence to construct priesthood's modern-day meaning, usage, and relevance. With their own understandings of religion and spirituality, coupled with revelation, they laid the foundation of the practice and meaning of the priesthood. Women, on the other hand, having only recently come into some influence in the Church and society, are just now beginning to understand (through their own work and research) how their reality differs from men's. Unfortunately, we women do not have other women in spiritual power to receive and shape a priesthood for us. While women hold spiritual leadership roles, such as in the Relief Society and Young Women's presidencies, they may be viewed only as administrators and role models, and are not given the same respect for interpreting and understanding theology as are general authorities. How do we as a people, and as women, view women's authority and ability to interpret and understand doctrine?

A HISTORY OF WOMEN AND MALE-  
CONSTRUCTED MODELS

*Why don't we tell Hannah and Samuel's story  
as much as we do Abraham and Isaac's?*

**I**N the sixties and seventies, record numbers of women began pursuing careers but found that the career world belonged to men. Women felt validated on many levels when they entered and suc-

ceeded in this male world. The feminist movement found giving up all that was "feminine" more acceptable than not entering the workplace. In fact, many defined feminism as the swapping of the feminine for the masculine. This kind of conformity, however, is not acceptable for many women and feminists anymore. Women have found that their experiences are not the same as men's. Women do not want to deny, devalue, or doubt their own experience, or silence parts of themselves in order to succeed. Much of the business world no longer expects a woman to give up being a woman in order to work. More and more women are able to manage on their own terms; they undertake research with expanded methodologies; they trade, barter, and negotiate in a way that is inclusive of relationships; they construct non-hierarchical businesses.

But this change has taken twenty years, and the fallout from this painful process is immeasurable. Yet this societal shift appears to be an unavoidable process. Throughout history, women who have wanted to stretch beyond the role handed them have had to strike out on their own. We have rarely been invited to join male domains—at least initially. Women were not invited to Harvard College; Radcliffe, its "sister" college, was started by women for women. And only after it found success did Harvard allow some women to take a few classes; eventually, the two colleges merged. Similarly, women were not invited to join the priesthood and so came up with the Relief Society. Joseph, upon hearing the plan for the proposed Relief Society, said he would provide "something better for them. . . . I will organize the women . . . after the priesthood and after the pattern of the priesthood."<sup>1</sup>

Women in our culture have been taught, to one extent or another, to seek validation from men on many levels—from our fathers that we were daddy's girl, from our brothers that we were as cool as they were (whether or not we really liked playing army), from bishops that we were worthy of callings, from boyfriends, professors, bosses, husbands. We have sought validation that our bodies were beautiful, that we were attractive, smart, witty, desirable, spiritual, marriageable. Overall, men are seen as the movers and the shakers of the world—they get the attention, the jobs, the money, both from other men as well as from women—so

for women to seek their validation makes some practical sense. To want the priesthood that men have, their positions of leadership, their privileges to shape and interpret theology—this priesthood envy is not out of order. But instead of conforming to a certain male model to gain validation, we must seek to understand what *our* metaphors of spirituality are so that we may feel empowered from within.

In moving beyond the priesthood debate, I align myself with others who claim that women need to find their own meanings within spirituality—that we need to actively, individually *and* collectively, define what we spiritually and ecclesiastically need and want. I think that the current practices and definitions of the priesthood meet the spiritual and psychological needs of men, but this model has been applied to all of us; any deviation from it has been seen as not normal, or even bad.

In Western civilization, women's thinking and psychology have been largely misunderstood by both men and women. Harvard developmental psychologist Carol Gilligan has written that when women try to fit into the male culture at large, the usual result is that they, and others without power, are either knowingly or unknowingly silenced.<sup>2</sup> It is extremely difficult to empower powerless group A by passing down dominant group B's norms of thought, speech, and belief. Usually, the dominant group's construction of language, thought, and action is viewed by that group, as well as by other less powerful groups, to be *the* reality; the minority group's practices are viewed as less developed. This group in turn must adapt by psychologically splitting off parts of themselves, resulting in a good/bad split between what is espoused and what is experienced.

For example, until recently, psychologists thought of women as less sophisticated in reasoning, less logical in moral thinking, and in a state of fusion within relationships.<sup>3</sup> More recent research has shown that women's moral reasoning is not inferior to men's, and that rather than basing their moral thought on a system of laws and hierarchical rules, women base their moral thinking on a system of care and connection. So rather than subverting hierarchical laws, women take context into consideration. Gilligan has found, for example, that girls will stop a game if someone is not fitting in or having a



good time. It is more important for them that everyone be taken care of than for the game to go on. Furthermore, girls usually engage in inclusive games that provide a role for everyone. In boys' games, someone who does not fit in or follow the rules is "out." Boys play games with strict rules and hierarchies—some people definitely are "better" at a game than others—with obvious winners and losers. For boys, games, not their participants, are the focus.

These two different approaches don't always fall under categories of gender. Last week in Relief Society, a young sister expressed some concern over a sibling who was no longer active in the Church and as a result was no longer included in her family functions. One woman brought up the question of which is more important—the family rules or the person. Yet another sister countered by saying that as Church members we have the truth, and we know the rules to live to get back to our Heavenly Father—either you're in or out. This comment stopped all conversation about the matter, since this approach honoring the rules rather than the people involved is privileged in the Church.

Another example might be Abraham, who was willing to kill his son for the principle of obedience. (See Gen. 22.) In contrast, Hannah was hesitant to give up her baby Samuel to the Lord. (See 1 Sam. 1.) Hannah's obedience was based on her connection to her infant and the Lord, and her story is one of negotiation—she balanced her needs and her child's needs with those of the Lord. While I assume that both of these parents loved their children, each expressed and defined that love quite differently. Hannah's

love was defined by connection; Abraham's was defined by obedience to a hierarchy in which the Lord held the highest position. And just as Abraham followed the Lord, Isaac, in turn, was to show love for his father by obeying his instruction. If these two stories can be taken as representative, it would appear that men and women have different notions of spirituality and the human relationship with God. In each story, obedience was important, but it played out differently.

Abraham's story of spiritual development is the one that has been retold many times: through self-subverting obedience we will find favor with the Lord and ultimately be able to return to him. Hannah's story of connection and negotiation with the Lord is not as familiar, probably because it does not reflect the model of spiritual development currently espoused in the Church. But for me, a woman, the story of Abraham and Isaac has always felt wildly immoral and selfish, while Hannah's story feels real and understandable. Yet it has been difficult to voice this opinion in church, since Abraham has become the only model of righteous obedience. My understanding of what is a moral person has been forced into a model it clearly did not fit. As women, we do have our own spiritual interests, experiences, and practices. Our spirituality, our constructs of theology, and our interpretations of our relationship with God reflect our understandings of self and other. As a developmental psychologist, through my own research and that of others, I understand that women and men come to know and conceptualize self and other through very different experiences, starting as early as infancy. These differences should be reflected

in the priesthood women have.

#### MALE AND FEMALE DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

*Men separate themselves from their women caregivers, while women connect with them.*

**I**N Western societies, we view infants as highly dependent beings with the potential of eventual independence. Our very notion of selfhood includes differentiation and separation from others. But for male infants dependent upon female primary caregivers, this developmental task becomes tricky. Nancy Chodorow theorizes that in order to differentiate from their female caregivers, male infants must become independent of them.<sup>4</sup> Becoming a self for males means separating from the mother, a female. For the growing toddler and preschool male, close relationships with female caregivers are simultaneously desired and guarded against, since they threaten both selfhood and development of gender identity. So the male self is experienced separately and autonomously; relationships are viewed with suspicion as encroaching upon the developing self.

Unlike males, females do not need to totally differentiate themselves from their female caregivers who also serve as their gender role models.<sup>5</sup> In fact, female infants seek to identify with their female caregivers as part of their development of self. Relationships, then, are not experienced as a problem or threat to individuation. Instead, the experience of relationship is an integral part of self-development.<sup>6</sup> The self, therefore, does not have to totally separate from (m)others in order to be different, and relationships are experienced as necessary for growth. Others are experienced as connected to the self.

Male and female children in our culture grow up with different experiences of self—one conceptualized as separate, one connected—and different experiences of relationships—one as possible threat, one as enhancement. The worlds of men and women are shaped by these powerful, albeit different, experiences of self and relationships. Generally speaking, women base their ideas of theology, relationships, and philosophy on their experiences of inclusion and connection. Men, on the other hand, structure their philosophies, theology, and relationships based on their experiences of separation. But the concept of relationships is tricky when separation is the developmental goal. The need to remain separate in order to protect the individuation of the self conflicts with relationships. And since humans are so-



"Mrs. Smith . . . ? This is Elder Jones. You've been chosen for a free trial membership!"

*If we look at Christ's life from a female perspective, perhaps we will be able to add to our understanding of the meaning of his life.*

cial beings, this is especially problematic.

Hierarchical forms of relationships have been a solution to the male problem of preservation of self. Through hierarchy, men can protect their needs for separation and protect their individuation through status. In a hierarchy, people are either above or below each other—always maintaining some sort of boundary, some type of separation between self and other.

Christianity puts men in an awkward position. Christian principles of loving and serving others challenge this understanding of "separate" relationships. If men see non-hierarchical relationships as a possible encroachment on the self, then loving and serving others can certainly be threatening. The writers of the New Testament grappled with this "threat" as they tried to make sense of Jesus' radical doctrine to "love one another." (John 13:34.) This new doctrine is worded in a way that makes service and love of others a means toward the finding of the self, or at least a requirement for the ultimate reward—life with God and Christ. So rather than self-depletion, love of others is newly cast in the light of self-enhancement.

As a hierarchy, the priesthood is a nice solution to the problem of balancing self-protection and Christian requirements of giving of the self. While men serve others, separation from the other is preserved through the rank and status of the priesthood offices. Christian principles of love and service are incorporated into the hierarchy as a means of advancement.

Women, on the other hand, see neither the intimacy of serving one another nor the connection of loving one another as a threat. We have no need for hierarchy to protect individuation as we love and serve others. We do not need or want to distance ourselves from each other through rank and status. We don't need to conquer ourselves to serve others (a doctrine that has always seemed foreign to me), nor do we fear connections with others, since we have experienced relationships not as fusion or a loss of self, but as enhancement to ourselves. Service isn't seen as sacrifice of the self, but as a part of the connectedness of everyday human life. A hierarchy of rules is not as necessary to govern relationships that ensure service and love for each other; for women, an ethic of care and connection explains the functioning of rela-

tionships. Structures, rank, laws governing relationships, lists of self-conquering exercises—hierarchy—do not feel useful to women. They may, in fact, make women feel distanced from relationships and from our spiritual interests. Relationships, love, service, and spirituality presented in a linear, stair-like, or ladder-like model do not resonate with women's real life experiences.

#### MALE AND FEMALE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

*Men approach God through obedience to rules; women through understanding self and others.*

**S**PIRITUAL development and relationship with God, then, may differ between the sexes. Spiritual growth for LDS men is perceived as movement within the hierarchy. Within both the spiritual hierarchy and priesthood hierarchy, God is in the top position. All underlings must obey those in the higher status positions, who have received the word from God. Spiritual growth is advancement through obedience. Again the metaphor of the ladder—the more we obey, the higher we step up toward God. As men progress in the hierarchy, they attain more prominent positions which provide them more power to act as individuals. They literally become the "judges in Israel." Judging (or our notion of judgment) requires total separation, even "objectivity," or, in other words, consideration of neither connection nor context. Finally, God the Father is conceptualized as the ultimate judge. And, as a judge, he is separated from man. Man must therefore do all that he can to progress within the hierarchy, to obey and climb the ladder; that is the only way to attain redemption and reunion with God.

My experience, and that of many women with whom I have spoken, is that God, like other people, is not completely "separate" from us. Understanding and loving the self and others is also understanding and loving God. We are all connected in different ways. Just as infant girls experience relationships with their caregivers as part of their growing identities, God is, to me, a part of myself. Lists of steps for a closer relationship with God seem almost blasphemous, denying what I have felt my relationship with God to be. As I get to know myself, others, and situations in the world around me, I understand

more of who and what God is. Understanding is my spiritual journey, a journey that connects me with others on their journeys. So coming into a relationship with God feels less to me like steps on a ladder and more like a process of discovering myself, others, and the context in which we all live.

Achieving closeness to God through prerequisite laws depends on the view that God is outside of the self, that only through conquering or disciplining the self can it be achieved. Yet if God is within all of us, understanding God requires not the conquering of self, but a deep understanding of self and others. Laws seem arbitrary at times, even at odds with approaching God through understanding the self (self-in-relation-to-God). What feels right to me is not necessarily obedience, but knowledge. Obedience may make me "close" in proximity to God, but proximity does not guarantee intimacy, understanding, or "being with." Being with God, or anyone else, for that matter, is not accomplished through mere proximity. "Being with" is gradually attained through understanding, sharing, negotiating, and, ultimately, knowing.

The issue of women and priesthood is a question of women and our understanding of redemption. I fundamentally believe that Christ is central to our redemption. But in current LDS theology, Christ is merely the means of mercy in a hierarchical progression model, with God as the judge. Yet the most important thing that Christ taught and lived is the "rule" of loving one another. This puts a spin on the previously mentioned Relief Society sister's comment: yes, we do have the truth, and the truth is that we should love one another. The person is not only more important than the rules, the rule is love for that person. Christ's example is female as well as male. I often think about what his life, teachings and example have given us—a role of love, an example of a connected relationship with a Father in Heaven—a self-in-relation-ship with God. Christ's life has been interpreted through an obedience and repentance model, with Christ as a gatekeeper to grace and forgiveness. If we look at Christ's life from a different perspective, perhaps we will be able to add to our understanding of the meaning of his life, and this expansion may give new meaning to our own lives.

## CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY AND THE PLAN OF SALVATION

*The Garden of Eden story is a male model of separation, individuation, and obedience.*

PSYCHOLOGY and cultural anthropology have led me to see that our culture's psychological ideals are only a secularized version of its spiritual or religious story. Cultural psychologist Suzanne Kirschner claims that "our Western psychology is a transmuted version of our Judeo-Christian tale."<sup>7</sup>

Our basic Western developmental psychology is as follows: the infant is born in a fused, happy state with its mother; the developing child must break from this relationship in order to find its own identity and become an autonomous self. Only after full individuation can the self come into relationship and intimacy with another. Our notions of child-rearing, selfhood, self-esteem, relationships, marriage, and mental health all stem from this same cultural story. Does this story sound familiar?

Adam and Eve, we are taught, were in a fused or merged, peaceful, symbiotic relationship with God. Then Eve chose to disobey (or understand more) in an act of selfhood, and left the Garden of Eden with Adam in order to develop agency and, ultimately, selfhood. Only after they proved themselves and overcame their "selves" through obedience could they come into the much longed-for reunion with God. This is a tale of breaking away from a symbiotic relationship with God, a quest to find selfhood and agency, then conquering the self in order to obey God in order to gain the much desired reunion with him.

This is not only our Adam and Eve story, but it is also our Plan of Salvation, with the premortal life (rather than the Garden) as our symbiotic state with God, and with this life as our chance to prove our selfhood, to gain individuation. By conquering the self and submitting to God's will, we can gain proximity to him. The Plan of Salvation brings us from a merged state into separateness, and when we are firmly separated, we can again be with God.

This story nicely follows our Western model of psychological development—separation, individuation, and reunion after the self has been "proven." Our Judeo-Christian tale, our Adam and Eve story, and our Plan of Salvation have all been interpreted through a male construction of experience—just as our theories of psychological development have been. Our entire Judeo-Christian heritage, our models of power, our notions of right-

eousness and sin, our ideas of self, other, love, and service are all male constructs, a retelling of the male dilemma between separation and union, a troublesome relationship between self and other.

Women have been saddled with this story of spirituality and psychology, and its resulting practices, beliefs, and language. In the secular world, we have recently found these models to be incomplete, and have begun to research and understand the female psychological story. It is not one of separation, but one of connection. Nor is our growth story one of obedience; it is, rather, a story of understanding and knowing. Now it is time for us to further question, explore, and understand what our spiritual story is.

### WE MUST ACT

*Women must define a priesthood that reflects our spiritual styles and interests.*

WOMEN need to understand our spiritual selves and spiritual interests and work to define a practice of priesthood that would incorporate these interests. It is something only we can construct; men cannot give it to us, though they can encourage us to do it. As women, we have been trained from early on to wait for things to be given to us—Church callings, speaking assignments, dates, marriage. Perhaps we have not had the confidence to move forward in a system where we didn't fit. We have been socialized to think that if our experience does not fit the model, the problem lies in our experience—not in the model. We can no longer wait for someone else to change the model for us. We need to be engaged in the work of taking our ideas seriously and expanding the models and metaphors of spirituality and theology. As women, we are in a difficult position. Religion, spiritual language, and practice have already been defined. We cannot completely divorce ourselves from that which has come before us, but in some way we have to work to understand the language and the concepts that do not resonate with our experience, as well as those that do.

In moving beyond the priesthood debate, we must go beyond debating how and when we can insert ourselves into a male construct. Then, and only then, can we find the spiritual archetypes, language, and practices that will ultimately validate our experiences, empower us, move us. The practice of the priesthood may very well serve to help men achieve a relationship with God and enable them to love and serve. If we women are to hold the priesthood, we will have to under-

stand how its practice and conceptualization can reflect our spiritual needs and interests. If we do not work toward this, we will have to continue placing our spiritual interests into a male spiritual hegemony that will ultimately fail us.

We must act—just as Eve in the Garden—to find understanding and knowledge. Adam was uncomfortable that Eve had broken the rules—but the rules seem to have been his rather than hers. Eve's action was a spiritual quest for discovery and knowledge—and that was just a beginning. We need to take the spiritual courage of Eve, rather than passively waiting for someone to tell us what to do, or grant us permission. We need to take our spiritual understanding seriously. We have much to contribute to humanity's understanding of spirituality, Christ's life, and what it means to be in relationship with God. Just as the apple intrigued Eve, the apple intrigues me. We, as women, need to take a bite. God is waiting for us to do so. ☐

### NOTES

1. Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of the Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 27.
2. See Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).
3. Lawrence Kohlberg and R. Kramer, "Continuities and Discontinuities in Child and Adult Moral Development," in *Human Development*, no. 12 (1968): 93–120.
4. See Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).
5. Jean Baker Miller, *Towards a New Psychology of Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976).
6. Miller, *Towards a New Psychology of Women*.
7. Suzanne Kirschner, "Anglo American Values in Psychoanalytic Developmental Psychology," in *Psychological Anthropology: Fifty Years after Freud*, ed. D. Spain (New York: Psyche Press, 1992), 177.

## RESEARCH REQUEST

A photo historian, who is compiling a book on "Americans in Kodachrome," is looking for slides of Utahns taken from 1945–1965.

If slides are selected, contributors will receive a copy of the book and two Dye Transfer prints.

The author assures all slides will be handled with care and returned within three weeks.

To submit slides or obtain more information, contact:

Guy Stricherz  
23 Prince Street  
New York, NY 10012



# PENTECOST, GETHSEMANE, PRIESTHOOD

By Marni Asplund-Campbell



*We describe spiritual growth as a hero journey, an upward progression through lines of authority. Those who live for others do not have these heroic stories to tell. They clean and cook and build the fires around which the legends are spoken.*

[N]o living word relates to its object in a singular way: between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists an elastic environment of other, alien words about the same object, the same theme, and this is an environment that is often difficult to penetrate.

—MIKHAIL M. BAKHTIN<sup>1</sup>

JUNE 1990

I AM SITTING on the deck with Eliza, sunning my legs, hoping to write something worthy of this small presence in the basket. I cannot begin to imagine that this child is mine.

MARNI ASPLUND-CAMPBELL is a writer and English teacher originally from Kingston, Ontario.

I stare at her birth pictures—the one where her head has just been born, and we are like a two-headed beast, Dr. Doolittle's pushmi-pullyu. I push: she is pulled. I thought her neck would snap as the doctor grasped the head with both hands, finger looped under her arm, twisting her shoulders through one by one. He said, "Babies are pretty hard to break. They're almost made of rubber." She's known me from the inside out—traced my inside shape with her fingers, watched my blood move through the silver filter of her eyelids. I could feel her head buried between my legs for the last few weeks, making me walk slowly, cautiously, like Mother on the icy driveway in high heels.

Labor was far different than I expected. I thought that it would be a Gethsemane, that childbirth was a woman's opportunity to identify in a physically intimate and exclu-

sive way with Christ's passion. But I wasn't even certain I was having contractions. You spend so much time wondering what it will feel like, and asking other women what it feels like. It's the worst pain you've ever had, I'd heard, taken to the power of ten. It is indescribable, a sensation of overwhelming tension and compression, not a topical pain, not the damaging pain that warns you when something's wrong. It is a forceful gathering, centered deep in the belly, of pure electric energy. Suddenly, I was leaning hard against the stove while I stirred curried rice, feeling like all of the strength had left my legs, arms, and head. I'd eaten two pints of ice cream—Ben and Jerry's New York Super Fudge Chunk—with my mother that afternoon.

When we finally went to get Greg at work, I knew that I couldn't drive. Swearing as she negotiated the four lanes and potholes of State Street, Mom squinted at her tiny watch to time my progress. When we got to the hospital, the nurse told me, with a thumbs up, that I was five centimeters dilated. The next two hours are a blur. I wanted to stay in control. I didn't want to scream. I'd read dozens of books—Lamaze, Bradley, and my favorite, *Immaculate Deception*, where Suzanne Arms states that doctors "anesthetize women to anesthetize themselves."<sup>2</sup> I was going to have a natural, spiritual childbirth experience. Mom rubbed my feet, and Greg did the most dangerous work of all—bearing with my impatient, uncomfortable, face-to-face anger. "Come here and breathe with me," I demanded, and then, "Get away and brush your teeth." As all of my energy became focused inward, any exterior stimulus, sounds, smells, became inordinately irritating, interrupting the quickening tempo my body was setting. I saw the contractions as a hill where I used to jog on my mission. I would close my eyes and hold on until I reached the peak, breathing deeply, and then let the force of gravity pull me down the other side—such relief reaching the bottom. But quickly, they became more like the waves at Martha's Vineyard, building on each other, smashing me full force before I could get up and shake the sand from my ears. I was losing control. My breathing became a steady moaning. "Oh gosh," I said. "Oh gosh"—I maintained a civil tongue.

My eyes were still closed, but I couldn't see the hill any more, only dark lightning bursts. I felt a warm stickiness between my legs, and opened my eyes long enough to see that it was dark, red, thick blood. A good sign, I remembered. Bright red blood was dangerous, indicating a separated placenta, leaking the specially oxygenated blood

meant for the baby. We give the best of ourselves to our children, the brightest blood, and what was left was oozing out of me now, old and tired, phlegmatic. The nurse told me that they had a birthing room available, and so I walked across the hallway, fully dilated, half naked, caring nothing for modesty.

The birth itself was astonishing for the contrasts—awed silence and extraordinary gore—blood from a small incision, blood on the baby, and a bucket of placenta—pain and then sudden relief. I was surprised by her beauty, even with a squashed nose and bright red eyelids. Her face was round, with full, drooping cheeks, her hands broad and sturdy, like Greg's. It was more like Pentecost than Gethsemane—jubilant, boisterous, rushing waters, rushing Spirit. I have read of people giving birth in the dark so that they could see the angels attending the newly arrived soul. I saw nothing but smooth, slippery flesh, flat, purple feet, divine.

She still feels like a foreigner to me, and she intimidates me. I have only played Beethoven in the house so far, the late string quartets, just to keep things holy. She is a small heliotrope, following light, any light, religiously, focusing on little else. Her eyes are still a cloudy, deep, denim blue, and I'm certain they'll be brown. Her hands are curled. There is an entire world in her hands. My love for her is like a dark bruise I must

press from time to time, around its edges, just to remember how it hurts. I make myself picture her falling from the high edge of the deck, or accidentally flying through the car window, and I play through the horror in my mind. But there is another brief, more deadly sensation that I don't have to invent, a violent betrayal at the edge of the bruise, behind the fear of losing her—the relief of losing her, the peace of a return to myself.

1995

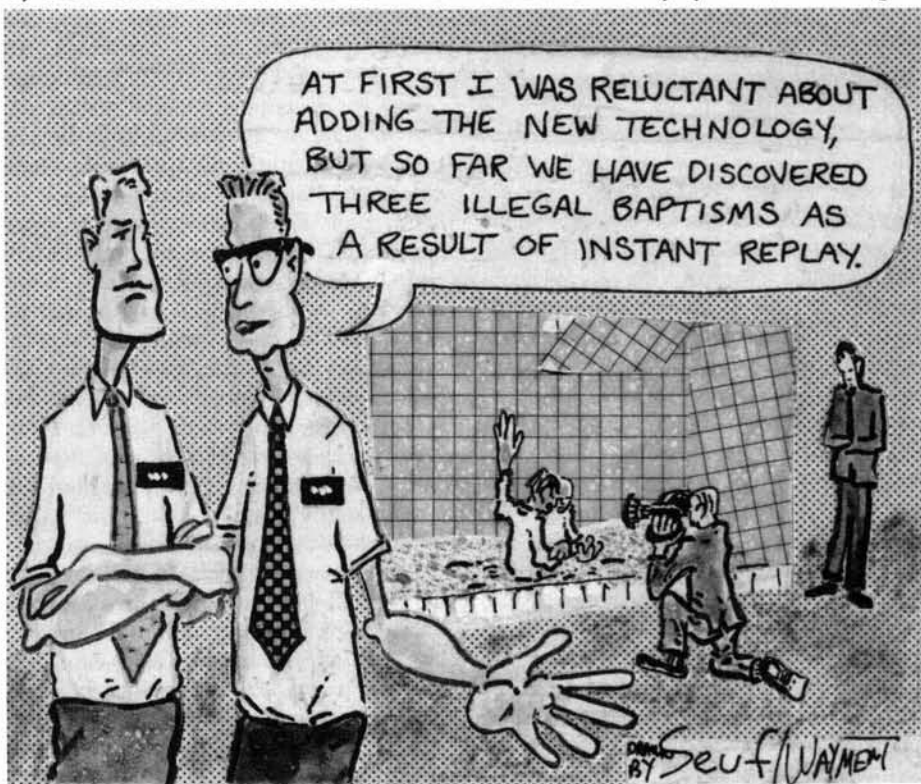
**M**Y daughter now plays complex games that only she fully understands. She is sometimes a fairy in her black leotard, pink tights, and pink plastic shoes. I have to ask for the right favors in the acceptable sequence, and after they have been granted I'm supposed to thank her, she says. But she needs to disappear first, so that I can wonder aloud where the fairy has gone. This can take hours, because she can read boredom and detachment in my eyes, even if the rest of my face is fully posed in rapt involvement. And then the game starts over. Yesterday she had a stick, which she thumped on the ground, chanting Spanish-like syllables—a-way-lama-nee-oh-tay. Then I got the stick, and I was supposed to chant, too, but I didn't know what to say, so I improvised. But it was wrong. After a few false starts she started to like my syllables, and the game

succeeded.

I don't know where these games come from, and it irks me, frankly, that she has begun so soon to possess a life within her mind so utterly distinct from mine. This is the tragedy and triumph of motherhood—to have known with precise intimacy the moment of a person's creation, to feed the young life, count its daily movements, weigh its growth, and hold off disaster with a thousand inward prayers, instinctively blessing the belly with spread hands. To give birth, forcing the new shape and mass with pain into the world, and then to reach the shocking recognition that this life is yours to command, a relentless stewardship. And just when you have learned the rhythms of infant life, feeding, cleaning, catching and soothing, with unconscious, exhausted grace, the person pulls away. She has her own thoughts, her own rules. And now I am the initiate, learning to play wish with the fairy and bang the stick.

I am always captivated, and held captive, by her need to develop. Adrienne Rich describes the mother's subordination in a less personal and more political context as the "powerless authority."<sup>3</sup> That is, mothers are ultimately responsible for the care and nurture of children, they are accountable to the state for the impact those children have on society (there are only "welfare mothers"), and yet they have no power within the political realm commensurate with this extensive responsibility. In fact, the motherhood responsibility is a liability in the policy-making, power-exchanging world.

In the Old Testament we read the stories of two parents, a mother and a father. Abraham, the great patriarch, promised a vast and righteous posterity, is asked to kill his only son as an emblem of his commitment to his God. Abraham obliges, makes ready with a dagger and with wood to divide and burn his son's body on an altar, and is miraculously blessed, first with an angelic command to stop, and then with a ram in a thicket. (See Gen. 22.) His willingness to surrender his child in the name of Truth, to violate the divine stewardships of parental hospitality and protection, endures as an emblem of righteousness and a hallmark of his superior fatherhood. Then there is the nameless mother who brings her child before Solomon. (See 1 Kgs. 3:16–28.) Like Abraham, she needs to prove her identity. But there is no angel to stay the dagger, so she chooses to sacrifice the Truth, surrender to her emotions, and deny her motherhood rather than divide her child asunder. We



*We need to follow Christ, who deliberately undermined the hierarchy of power, and taught the lesson of Gethsemene, which is that we are the most exalted when we have surrendered our authority.*

forget this mother's choice, and the lesson it teaches about the ambiguity of truth. I imagine that to the nameless woman, being mother meant, at that moment of public decision, not being mother. And I love her for her decision and her genius, knowing that she could maintain her identity only by denying it.

I do not intend to make generalizations about motherhood, womanhood, or even the feminine in order to isolate and reduce my experience to a biological or socially constructed phenomenon. I describe the mothering experience that has shaped my identity as a woman and as a spiritual being in order to clarify, through representation, a fundamental flaw in the reasoning that concludes that by ordaining women to the priesthood in the LDS church we will help, as Scott Fisher writes, "solve all the problems of discrimination, insult, and abuse that women sometimes receive in the Church," or even "build a better bridge" over which we can pass to achieve the unity that characterizes Zion. To achieve these ends, we need to think much more deeply about change, focusing on our most basic assumptions about power, authority, and spiritual progression. We must question the assumptions that allow us to forget the identity of the mother who, emulating a holy order, chose relationship over Truth. We must remember that Christ made a similar choice, accepting the indignity of anonymity for his children's sake.

By motherhood I mean, on a narrative level, my own experience with bearing and raising children. I cannot escape these tangible metaphors, these small children, who continually remind me of the perils of spiritual commitment, the covenant of duty. But there is a much broader, and I hope more universal, significance to "mothering" behind the narrative, beyond the children, which has to do with the ideal of Christian living; motherhood is a way of choosing, and not choosing, to live for others. It is the promise we make as followers of Christ to love one another as he loves us. To love one another more than we love ourselves. Always. And although offering the women of the Church the very real social authority of priesthood ordination may be a step in achieving a more

constructive spiritual society, it is not enough. We must restore to our theology, and the practice of that theology, a sense of the primacy of this living for others that transcends hierarchy, and values the face-to-face relationship more than systemic efficiency. We must acknowledge the life-giving, life-bearing properties of God.

One fast Sunday, a woman in my ward stood to bear her testimony. She wanted to tell the story of helping her friend through the early stages of labor. She struggled to find words to describe the religious relevance of the shared breathing, the rocking and moaning, and finally dwindled into a vague apology. "I don't know why I wanted to tell you this," she said, and she quickly closed with an amen. She realized, as the words took shape, that she was telling the wrong story. As we have forgotten that God is creator, not just organizer, we have come to describe the process of spiritual growth as a hero journey, with royal sons seeking reunion with their fathers, encountering monsters of sin, temptation, discouragement. The journey is marked by an upward progression through lines of authority and ordination. Those who live for others do not have these heroic stories to tell. They clean and cook and build the fires around which the legends are spoken. They attend the births of heroes. And they are silenced by the mundane, never-finished nature of their tasks. There are no titles to be achieved.

What we have forgotten is the spiritual richness of living for others. The richness is apparent in the troubling paradoxes, the absence of completion, the eternal nature of the work of genuine self-sacrifice. My father died in the year that my daughter was born, and I felt I would never recover from the wounding shock of the news on our answering machine, or the vision of his cold, yellow flesh. But I have learned to live without him. I have an accommodation with grief. I still haven't learned to live with the children. I have learned to live a life of sensation without vision. I can hear pain or fear or boredom at the edge of a child's voice. I can smell an infection on a baby's breath. I can chart subtle variations in temperature with my cheek pressed to a small head. But I can't

see my children. Themselves. All I see are fantastic visions of cars smashing through the fence right where they're playing in the sandbox, or their hands and feet mangled by the electric mixer and the lawn mower, the hands suddenly playing Beethoven on a broad stage. Malevolent strangers linger in parks, church corridors, even at the top of the night stairs, and I see the children in dark places, lonely and frightened, abused by strangers. And I see health rising in them as I feed them lentils and whole milk, bananas and wheat cereal. I see my children, I tell my husband, through my third eye, through a filter of superstition and reluctant prophecy. They are always in potential. Only occasionally, when they are still and sleeping, am I blessed with human eyes that mark with amazement the slenderness of the little girl's wrists, the sudden length of the baby in his crib.

This is my spiritual experience, the experience of motherhood, slowly relearning the meaning of the world, its malevolence and benevolence, through the eyes and nerves and hearts of other bodies. I have become a visionary, reluctantly, seeing a terrifying future in the transparent present, feeding the future with my hands, so that one day I will become an unnecessary peripheral in my own visions. I have bled for my children. And yet my religion offers me a bloodless theology. The priesthood that is compared to my motherhood is a state of being that is acquired, practiced, and exercised. It is heroic and optional. Our folklore is full of the stories of priesthood in practice. And I am still hesitant to tell the story of motherhood because it is sentimental. It violates my intellectual and spiritual training to talk of the biology of birth and daily work of tending to the children as equal to Pentecost, Gethsemene, or Priesthood. There are no hero mothers because we need a language that speaks of the living religion, of the word made flesh, to unify and equalize the disparate elements of human experience.

I am willing to accept these contradictions, to work through the contrasts of sublime and earthy that I face as I bear and raise my children. I can accept the challenges of Christianity, which include taking upon my-



self my sisters' and brothers' burdens; which include, beyond that safe filial duty, loving my enemies, those who disagree with me. I can accept the challenge to work within these loving, difficult relationships and to actively create a space, as a Mormon and a feminist, for the expression of women's experience. I cannot accept an analysis that concludes that extending the priesthood to women is just the thing to equalize the balance of power between the sexes; to lay to rest, finally, that tricky women's issue and, incidentally, free up the men's time once and for all. Fisher presents Rosa Parks and the civil rights movement as a model for change within the Church, implying that alterations in policy and practice will eventually lead to deeper changes in thought and attitude. Rosa Parks's brave and brilliant stand, and the subsequent accomplishments of the civil rights movement, did not, of course, eradicate the inequity of power between races. Racial inequity still thrives in the United States because we continually underestimate the power of the unspoken norm. Equal still means white. Priesthood will always mean man.

We need to follow Christ, who told us to radically rethink spiritual journeys, and who reminds us that the kingdom of God is within our hearts. We need to follow Christ, who deliberately undermined the hierarchy of power, and taught that the first shall be last. We need, more honestly, to tell our spiritual stories, and universalize and institutionalize the lesson of Gethsemane, which is that we are the most exalted when we have surrendered our authority. Women alone have known this far too well for far too long.

I WASN'T prepared for the speed of Thomas's birth. When we met the midwife at the hospital, I was still feeling sheepish for jumping the gun. I asked if I could keep my own clothes on for a while. I knew I had at least a few hours yet. I stood by the hospital bed, leaning forward, elbows on a pillow, during the contractions, while Greg rubbed my back. The midwife must have seen a change in my face; she told me to lie down. Suddenly, I was convulsed by a powerful, irresistible urge to push. The baby surged into the birth canal, his head crowned, and I was suddenly terrified. There is a moment in labor when the emotional trauma matches the physical, and you realize, as at no other time in your life, that there is no turning back. I was yelling, "I can't do it!" but I wasn't doing anything; it was happening. I needed to calm down so

that the midwife could control the delivery of the head, but I was paralyzed with pain, my knees tightly locked. Greg quickly took my hand and placed it between my legs, where I could feel the top of the baby's head. I was instantly calm, my eyes opened wide, and I pulled the baby gently into the open air.



## RECOVERING

First

you are a storyteller  
emerging feather-gowned  
from asphalt mists of blown bunkers,  
dazzling them with all you've seen, heard,  
worked for under war's heavy iron manhole:  
fear, waste, seasons of crime, war, disease;  
jungle tracers, flowering nights green and red,  
shrapnel strips, phosphorous blips,  
the crematorium smell of claymores.

Women screaming.

Women. In war.

Latin bullhorns erupt  
under bougainvillea arches  
clearing paths for  
the orchid-colored cardinals smiling  
through the genuflecting fools  
and shaking ants from tear-smearred bulletproof linen.

Second

you are a storyteller hidden  
with other homeless mystics under collapsed bridges,  
in deep storm drains echoing the message of water's  
violent washing away of progress and regress:  
holy floods leaving you and you and you  
gasping atop alluvial plains of razor gravel  
crying for entrance through the ark door.

You are a storyteller  
dodging the grease, dust, and rule of racist legislature,  
your creativity savaged from left-handed sides  
of bottom-down piles of charred books,  
your conviviality pulled from the mobs,  
your sanguine lyrics lifted from the bricks, shards,  
fragmentary songs of alcoholic priests.  
Storyteller. Skittish, when at all moved:  
lamed in the rush to pull down statues,  
handcuffed by assassins then abandoned,  
bloody, dazed and cordial,  
stumbling home to tell anyone all you've seen.

—SEAN BRENDAN-BROWN

## NOTES

1. Mikhail M. Bakhtin, "Discourse on the Novel" in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Carol Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 259-422.
2. Suzanne Arms, *Immaculate Deception, Immaculate Deception: A New Look at Women and Childbirth in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), ?.
3. Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born*, (NY: W. W. Norton and Co., 1986), 52.

## INTERVIEW

## EVENSON'S TONGUE

*A Conversation with Brian Evenson*



BRIAN EVENSON

*Often seen as controversial because of the violence and the apparent absence of morality in his stories, Brian Evenson speaks about the relation of his work to his faith. Evenson makes it clear that he is a responsible writer who explores the darkest sides of the human mind—showing in extreme what happens when we let our values go.*

BRIAN EVENSON ([evenson@jkhbhc.byu.edu](mailto:evenson@jkhbhc.byu.edu)) is an assistant professor of English at Brigham Young University and a writer of fiction. *Altmann's Tongue*, his first collection of stories, published by Alfred A. Knopf, has been given a powerful reception nationally and caused quite a stir in Utah. (See the news story, p. 70.)

This interview was conducted by Marni Asplund-Campbell ([campbell@jkhbhc.byu.edu](mailto:campbell@jkhbhc.byu.edu)).

**Is it better to present an idealized version of reality so that people can aspire to it, or to expose the seamy side of reality so that people can avoid it?**

There is room for both. My book has reached people that idealizations will never reach. People recognize in the characters their own potential for evil, their own potential cruelty and lack of feeling. What they are afraid of is the darkness that they see con-

cealed within themselves.

I'm interested in looking closely at areas that most Mormon writers shy away from. It seems to me that there are as many types of Mormon literature as there are Mormons. I suppose you must have some limitations, but very few. Look at the range that Jewish literature has. It includes the Torah, but it also includes books like Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint*. Roth might represent that which many Jews repress, but the repressed is no less part of the culture.

**You have said that you feel a spiritual responsibility to language.**

First and foremost, as a Mormon, my allegiance is to God. But in writing, all I can feel is the language. Everything is mediated by words, including our expressions of faith. I think to understand anything, as mortals, we must understand it through language.

**Gordon Lish takes great delight in the way your Mormon identity seems to contradict your writing, or even your persona as an author.**

Lish is very aware that I'm an active Mormon, and he's trying to see that as part of my work, somehow. Of course, he knows little about Mormonism—his ideas of Mormonism come from Harold Bloom's *The American Religion*—so he doesn't know quite how to make it fit. I think that my Mormonism is connected to my writing, since it is so much of my life, even if not in the ways Lish suggests. But it is rarely present in the way people would expect it to be.

We've been very narrow in defining what Mormon literature is. *Altmann's Tongue* is seldom visibly Mormon, though some of my more recent work is. The "Mormon" stuff I write is difficult—there's a story about three killers who pose as the three Nephites, and there's another about a man who tries to bless his dog and ends up shooting it when it won't cooperate (a true story, by the way)—but I still think that it's a valid part of the Mormon experience. With the killers posing as Nephites, for instance, I deal with the very real issue of how prone we are to self-deception and how much we want to force a spiritual meaning on everything. The story perhaps suggests that such forced interpretations can have life-wrenching consequences.

We have a tendency to construct life into a kind of narrative where everything has to fit into place. Now, first of all, I don't think narrative works like that in the hands of world-class writers, and, second, I don't think life works like that. From a mortal perspective, some things fit, but most don't. One must acknowledge a healthy measure of chaos.

We have certain patterns we try to impose like cookie cutters on our existence, certain preformulated packets that we apply to ourselves and to others—the good man wrongly persecuted, the obedient women blessed by God, the man whom the Lord is punishing, and so on. I don't think mortals can ever see life with an absolute objective purity, but we can step away from derivative genres and patterns and try to operate according to less distorting principles of organization.

**Would you look at someone like Jack Weyland, and that kind of fiction which consists of formulaic, romantic plots that end in happy marriages, as destructive?**

Some ways we try to construct our lives are destructive, and the fictions that we make to let us understand life are ways of keeping

us from living in contact with reality. That's why we construct these things—to keep life at a distance.

Formula Mormon fiction is much more destructive than the fiction I write. It teaches people that if their life doesn't fit into the pattern, they should force it to fit. It gives people models for living that are harmful to follow and that make people feel guilty about their actual lives. Morally, such stories are troubling—they push as gospel-truth things that have little to do with the gospel.

I think that many Mormon writers have decided in advance what their characters are going to think. That does a disservice. Let the characters think about things themselves, and they'll take you places.

Also, a majority of Mormon stories give catch phrases or terms in the first sentence or first paragraph to let you know immediately that the story is Mormon; making the reader know this often seems more important than the literary effort. It is almost as if they are nervous that people are not going to recognize their work as Mormon. If Mormon writers would relax and allow Mormonism to enter into their work naturally, the work would be much stronger. I get the idea from their stories that too many of our Mormon writers are sucking on their pencils, wondering, "What can I write that will be Mormon?" and then forcing that onto the page.

I see some of Mormon literature as destructive. You have, for instance, the kind of fiction that is propaganda. Propaganda seems to me the most destructive sort of fiction, a kind of fiction which tries to block all thought. Or you have a fiction that is so eager to teach a moral lesson that it doesn't think about the ramifications of what it is claiming

to teach. It teaches people to live in ways that are unlikely, or it presents a picture of the world that collapses at a touch. Or we have writers who react violently against Mormonism and try to preach against it, perhaps because they feel they have been wrongly treated at some point—a sort of reverse propaganda. In all of these, the primary concern is how Mormon you are rather than what you are doing in terms of literature. So it never amounts to literature.

I should say, however, that there are a number of Mormon writers who seem to me to have real strengths and a great deal of potential, even if they partly fall under the purview of my complaints. Walter Kirn, Darrell Spencer, Tim Liu, Levi Peterson, and Robert Hodgson Van Wagoner, for instance. Neal Chandler, too, as well as Bruce Jorgensen, Margaret Young, and John Bennion. There are more that I am forgetting.

### Should the literary effort in Mormon literature be more central than the Mormon content?

It has to be if we are to have a literature that is more than regional. If it's going to be Mormon literature, the emphasis must be on literature.

If you want to have an insular literature, in which the only people who are reading it are certain types of Church members, then Mormonism can be primary. But such surface expressions lack the strengths of good literature.

### Why aren't there any Mormon Miltons?

As long as we continue to cater to the lowest common denominator, there will be

no viable aesthetics in Mormon culture. As long as a concern for image—a concern which we have learned from advertising—remains the strongest factor, viable aesthetics will be virtually impossible.

We're not very supportive of aesthetics as a Mormon culture. We are fairly naive when it comes to art and are willing to learn only grudgingly. Many Mormons, even those who actively attend the arts, are relatively unaware of what serious artists both inside and outside the culture are currently doing. A lot of Mormons think that rather than trying to make people understand difficult art, it is better to lower the level of aesthetic expectation.

Aesthetics make people think, and thinking makes life a lot more dangerous. The more of a defined aesthetic that you have, the more potential challenge.

### Isn't it possible, through thinking too much, to get the Raskolnikov syndrome—to become so sophisticated that you think yourself above moral law?

That's true—that is what my story "Altmann's Tongue" is about. But there is a book by Dostoyevsky called *Demons*. What he talks about there is that our religious and political ideas are like demons that possess us. And we get so wrapped up in these ideas that they end up crushing our lives. Art can keep us from becoming wrapped up in a single set of ideas. Though art, too, can become a demon.

Dostoyevsky is a good example of the type of aesthetic I am suggesting. He's very religious, yet some of his characters challenge all notions of religion. Think of the under-

#### "ALTMANN'S TONGUE"

AFTER I HAD killed Altmann, I stood near Altmann's corpse watching the steam of the mud rising around it, obscuring what had once been Altmann. Horst was whispering to me, "You must eat his tongue. If you eat his tongue, it will make you wise," Horst was whispering. "If you eat his tongue, it will make you speak the language of birds!" I knocked Horst down and pointed the rifle, and then, as if by accident, squeezed the trigger. One moment I was listening to Horst's voice, his eyes brilliant—"the language of birds"—and the next I had killed him. I stared at the corpse next to Altmann's corpse. It had been right to kill Altmann, I thought. Given the choice to kill or not to kill Altmann, I had chosen the former and had, in fact, made the correct choice. We go through life at every moment making choices. There are people, Altmann among them, who, when you have sent a bullet through their skull, you know you have done the right thing. It is people like Altmann who make the rest of it worthwhile, I thought, while people like Horst, when killed, confuse life further. The world is populated by

Altmanns and Horsts, the former of which one should riddle with bullets on the first possible occasion, the latter of which one should perhaps kill, perhaps not: Who can say? I felt remarkably calm. I prided myself that moment on my self-composure, taking a minute to sit down next to the two corpses, Altmann and Horst, and to feel the calm to its greatest extent. This calm, I supposed, was not the result of killing Horst but, as one might expect, of killing Altmann. There are two types of people, I thought—type Horst and type Altmann. All people are either Horst or Altmann. I am the sole exception. I repeated the phrase *sole exception*, alternating it with *unique exception*, trying to decide which was the better, unable to decide. I flew blackly about, smelling my foul feathers and flesh. I stuttered, spattered a path through the branches of trees, sprung fluttering into blank sky.

This one-paragraph story is from the book, *Altmann's Tongue* (Knopf), and is reprinted by permission.



*We have a tendency to construct life into a kind of narrative where everything has to fit into place. I don't think life works like that. Some things fit, but most don't. One must acknowledge a healthy measure of chaos.*

ground man. Dostoevsky is, as Mikhail Bakhtin suggests, willing to let all sorts of voices speak. He's affirming his faith, but in very difficult ways.

**Are you concerned about reaching out to a "Mormon" audience?**

Not overly concerned. We become too obsessed with what others think. We make too many concessions to bad readers. Too much concern for audience has kept Mormon literature from being all it might.

After reading *Altmann's Tongue*, a friend called me on the phone and said, "You know what would be really nice is if you wrote, you know, Og Mandino. He takes an experience in the Bible, and he really fills it out so that you know the people and feel them. That's what you should do. You could really help people." I'm not interested in filling out biblical accounts—it seems to me a sort of falsification. I'm not here to help the people that can be helped that way—plenty of others are. I'm valuable for those people who will immediately dismiss stuff like Og Mandino, for those who think seriously about what they read.

Still, I know when I write certain things I might offend people because they have difficulty getting past the surface. For instance, I write things sometimes that I know my wife, Connie, will dislike reading. From a theoretical perspective, she understands what I do but doesn't always want to read it. I respect the difficulties she and others have with my approach. It isn't for everyone.

I value my membership in the Church. I believe in God and have a testimony of the Book of Mormon and of Joseph Smith as a prophet. I am doing work that does not harm the Church and which many people see as frightening but valid. But in some circles, I've already been ostracized.

**Non-Mormons have no trouble discerning "Mormonism" in your writing. Are you trying to represent Mormonism to the world?**

I think of myself as a faithful Mormon who's proud of being a Mormon, but do not consider myself a Mormon writer. I am a writer who's writing for a national audience that knows something about contemporary fiction.

I suppose that you do represent Mormonism if people know that you are Mormon. We're told constantly that we should be careful how we present ourselves. I think I have been careful enough.

**What kind of "models for living" are you giving in your writing?**

Well, I don't think of it in terms of providing models of living, though perhaps I am working against certain models of living. Though this is not my primary purpose.

Certain of the stories can be read as showing what happens to people when they begin to make minor compromises. A story like "Killing Cats" can be read as being about how if one gives in on small issues, one eventually ends up getting sucked in completely. Much in *Altmann's Tongue* is like that. In "The Father, Unblinking," you start lying about what's happened to your daughter, and you can't stop lying. You start lying about something, and you feel that you have to go on with the lies—and even that you are justified in continuing to lie. The stories show the moral barrenness into which such simple compromises eventually accumulate.

The characters in my stories I think of as having been Mormon. It's not obvious, but on a visceral level, I think of them as Mormon and often modeled them after people I knew growing up. The main character of "The Father, Unblinking," for instance, is partly modeled after an active Mormon I knew who kept his salary a secret from his wife, who controlled all aspects of his household. The story explores how such a person might react under more extreme circumstances. The main character in "Job Eats Them Raw, with the Dogs" is modeled after many Mormons I know who struggle between their allegiance to God and their allegiance to financial success.

After I came back from my mission, I worked a midnight shift sweeping parking lots where I met people who had cashed in their beliefs for various reasons. Most of them were lost and unhappy when they weren't drugged up, and many were extremely destructive or self-destructive. Good people, but morally desolate. My characters are—all of them—lapsed, have taken a fall from truth. They occupy a landscape which

is largely internal and whose horror is brought about as a result of having turned away from God. I don't think it's that far from much of what goes on in Utah, both among ex-Mormons and among apparently faithful members who are ethically blind on certain issues. There is a small minority of apparently faithful Mormons who abuse their children, who are dishonest, who wear false faces. The Church fights against this, but it still persists. Why? In these stories, I suppose I am trying to understand the why, to show the kind of moral numbness that allows people to live outside of belief.

The Boly stories are the fragments of a novel I thought about writing about a group of crazed, lapsed Mormons, though I quickly abandoned the project. If they are still Mormons, they are Mormons of the worst kind, having left all of their saving traditions behind and being willing to beat the hell out of one another or even to kill one another for a few dollars. It is very much like that—a sort of family tree, which, once diseased, keeps twisting inward on itself.

**Flannery O'Connor uses violence to indicate visitations of grace—Mary Grace throwing a book at Ruby Turpin, the mother being assaulted in "Everything That Rises Must Converge"—as well as the grotesque, as in "Good Country People." The spiritual message balances, or seems to justify, the disturbing images. But there is an absence of grace in your fiction.**

I like O'Connor a great deal and have learned much from her. She's a moral writer, though often curiously so—initially she was seen as precisely the opposite, but then people learned how to read through the grotesquerie of the surface.

I go a step further than O'Connor. In my fiction, grace is present for the reader because of the immensity of its absence—the completeness of the absence makes it palpable, causing the reader to carefully re-examine his or her own moral notions. You are forced to bring your morals up against the immoral quality of the world.

This is the sort of world in which God has been forced out by the inhabitants of the world. The characters are on the run, afraid

*In my fiction, grace is present for the reader because of the immensity of its absence—causing the reader to carefully re-examine his or her own moral notions.*

to feel, afraid to let God back into their lives because of their sense of guilt and because of the fear that they will be hurt. This extends to their interactions with others, making these interactions superficial or distant. I don't think God ever abandons us, but often people do everything they can to turn away from him.

**Where are your characters coming from? Is it some kind of Freudian inner voice? Is it inspiration? A muse?**

I think it comes from language—not so much Freud as Lacan. We are formed

through language, and in finding the idiosyncracies of a way of speaking and of formulating discourse and thought, we reveal character. As I write language, words begin to acquire an identity, and eventually through that identity, they begin to accumulate into a self. It is terrifying sometimes, as with "The Munich Window." From the first few lines, I knew the narrator was crazy because of the syntax he was using, but I didn't know how crazy. I've almost given up writing in first person, because I find it an incredible, emotional drain to have a close understanding of such people.



**How do you describe violent acts so vividly if you've never seen them?**

Some of them I have seen, though very few. It seems to me simply a matter of thinking about bodies and being accurate, establishing a sort of science or mathematics of physical interaction. This is the opposite of what Hollywood does. Hollywood's sensationalism and overabundance of blood and guts shows an unwillingness to confront violence for what it really is.

**There's your writing—and then there's *Natural Born Killers*. Two national works, simultaneously, from BYU-educated Mormon men, both notably violent.**

I haven't read enough of Dave Veloz's stuff to know for sure what he is after. Certainly, there are similar impulses in what I'm doing and what *Natural Born Killers* is doing, but a movie is much more immediate and affects more of the senses. I do a great deal to keep my readers from enjoying the violence.

**Do you feel that insanity is all around us?**

All order is based on chaos. Insanity rarely comes to the surface, but you see flickers of it often. If you are attentive in a certain way to human relations, you realize that people often claim a belief but blindly act in contradiction to it and that you have the same impulses in yourself.

**Don't your stories of violence toward women perpetuate misogyny?**

In the few stories that do have women, they are often cast as victims, mainly because I see violence and abuse as linked to masculine notions of power. From the outside, women seem to me to have different ways of postulating power, since often they have different ideas of how interpersonal relations function and of language's purpose. I haven't learned enough yet to think I can assume that sort of perspective and voice. I suppose the book tries to show what happens far too often to both women and men who are trapped in a system of competitive power gone mad. The prospects are grim for both sexes, but on the whole, are grimmer for women.

Certainly my writing depicts misogyny, but does so to let misogyny condemn itself. The problem with misogyny is that it is often veiled as a sort of kindness. What I try to do is bring it to the surface and show its ugliness, which might make me open to charges of perpetuating it. My intention, though, is to unmask it and allow it to be condemned.

**It seems more like the women in your stories are inert. It's odd, as a woman, to read the stories.**

I would think it would be disorienting, but I am surprised by how many women have recognized in the stories extreme versions of situations that they feel they have faced. Perhaps I am suggesting that this inertness is simply the dark side of putting women on a pedestal. In both cases, there is a severe limiting of possibilities for women.

**Is it dangerous to present women this way?**

Of course. I walk a difficult line. The stories aren't pleasant. They are difficult, but they are worthwhile. There's always a risk, and I've been open to that for a long time. I think it is a risk well worth taking, especially since it has been so scrupulously avoided by Mormons to this point.

**What was it like to write the Joseph Smith opera?**

I never really thought I could write an opera on Joseph Smith. But working with Christian Asplund has been very interesting and productive. I began writing the libretto as a favor to him but soon found that I was very much involved in the project. I learned a great deal about Joseph Smith and the martyrdom. The whole martyrdom was never as real to me as it has become by writing the opera.


One thing that I was very surprised about, once I began reading about the martyrdom, was that the things that were going on are very much in line with my own fiction. It's a volatile moment. You have a world turned against Joseph Smith—everybody on every side seems to be working against him, and people both for and against him are involved in acts of violence. I wasn't interested in questioning whether Joseph Smith was a prophet—I know he was—but in revealing the intensities, both spiritual and physical, of a certain moment. The libretto is an expression of faith, as spiritually genuine as anything I have ever done.

We talk about Gethsemane as a happy fact—which it is. But Gethsemane is also the scene of the most intense suffering ever known. I don't think we should gloss over

that. Our salvation from suffering only comes from Christ's pure suffering for us.

We gloss over a good deal of what Joseph Smith and other martyrs went through. It's not polite to talk about violence. I don't think we need to become gloomy or forget the positive role that Joseph Smith's death played, but we shouldn't forget that here is a man who watched people killed all around him, who was subject to intense physical and mental persecution by people both inside and outside the Church, who saw his own brother killed, and who was murdered himself.

**Do you think of your writing, ultimately, as a depiction of the Last Days?**

Certainly my work is apocalyptic. The Last Days in some ways have always been occurring on a smaller scale for individuals. We have the Last Days, but the grace and redemption does not come inside *Altmann's Tongue*. It comes outside the book, in the readers who, like Dante, have passed through the Inferno unharmed, have seen what Hell is like. It is up to them to judge what they have seen and move upward. 



## POETRY READING

The service-bay intellectuals  
shouted that mankind has declined,  
raged that classic poems are racist myths

then tucked their yellow foolscap  
and stained chapbooks.  
I buttoned my coat,  
watched them stagger out  
or knot aprons to continue wiping  
tables, stack greasy plates and filthy  
ashtrays. Final squelch of abused  
microphone, loud  
crowd milling for last call—  
hands extending cocktail  
chalices for alcohol sacrament.

Poetry is *not*  
this angry vulgarity  
paraded as Art these times,  
these places.

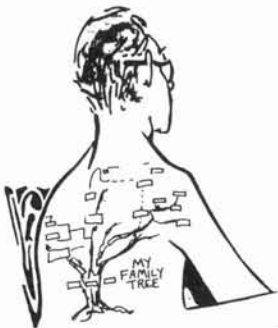
Outside the Tavern of Poets  
I stood under stars as Yeats, Whitman,  
Frost, Blake, Dickinson, and Keats  
have stood other places,  
different times—breath fogging,  
limbs trembling in half-warm overcoat  
those moments spiritually vast  
where the dark and cold  
do not frighten, where the poet  
reaffirms life not for the sake of ease  
but for those at the edge  
who need a god in front of themselves

—SEAN BRENDAN-BROWN



## MORMON TATTOOS

EVERY TATTOO A MISSIONARY



Seuf/WAYMENT

## LIGHTER MINDS

# WARD BALL: MORMONS' DARK SECRET

By Robert Kirby

**D**RAW CLOSER. I'm about to tell you a Mormon secret. Here it is: Believe it or not, the LDS church still uses blood in one of its sacred ordinances. It's a sinister, grueling affair accomplished only with a lot of groaning and screaming. It's called ward basketball.

For those unfamiliar with Mormon culture, ward ball is one of our darker secrets. It's the modern-day equivalent of the Mountain Meadows Massacre.

The main purpose behind the Church's sports program is one of fellowshiping. The Church hopes people will use sports competition as a bonding experience. It works. There's nothing that draws people closer together quite like lusting after each other's blood.

Mormon roundball is divided into three degrees of glory. First, there's Young Men's ball, comprising kids ages 12 to 18. Here, impressionable young men are introduced to the mechanics of sportsmanship, team cooperation, and cursing. Unofficially, ward ball also is supposed to instill in young LDS kids basic street survival skills. Ward ball is to Mormons what tai kwan do [?] is to Koreans. Mormon kids will need these skills when they're called on missions to places so rough and obscure that even the angels have to look them up in an atlas before fearing to tread there.

The second degree of ward ball glory is the varsity ward team. These are the 18 to 30 something priesthood holders, pseudo-jocks with intense attitudes about the celestial nature of ward ball. These guys shoot hoops

like maybe Bill Laimbeer and Dennis Rodman are spiritual giants instead of freaks of nature.

Second-degree ward hoopsters are skilled in two areas of roundball glory: the laying on of elbows and the bellowing of insults nasty enough to hurt the feelings of Gadianton robbers. To them, fellowshiping comes after the ballgame. It's what they do to make up for being such overly competitive jerks that they fouled out in the first quarter.

Finally, there's the "veteran team" or third degree of ward ball glory. The term "veteran," of course, is a polite euphemism for older Mormon men. These are guys long past their roundball prime, guys who can't hold a full-court press for longer than a minute without resorting to the sacred ward ball ordinance of trodding on tongues.

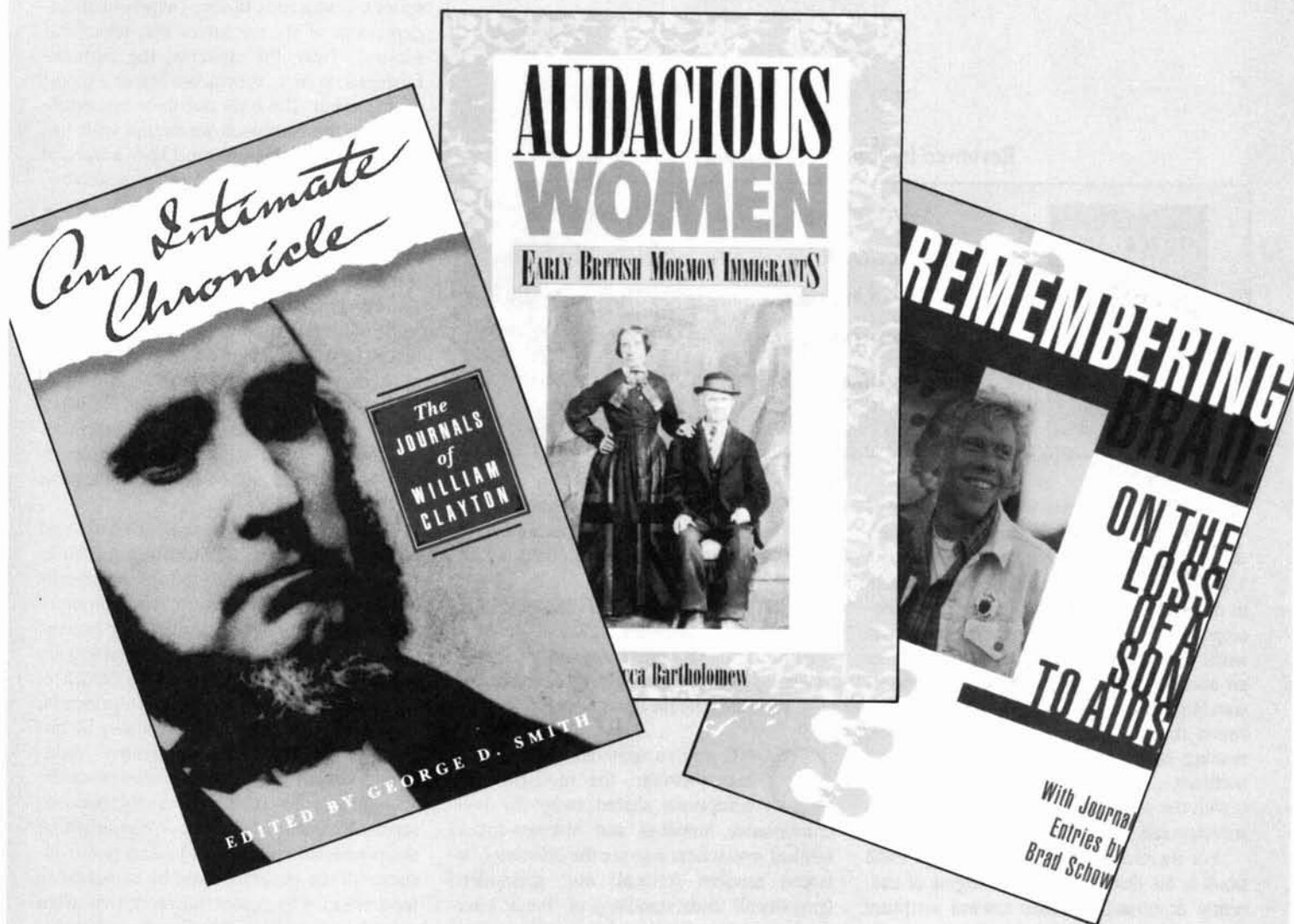
To have a real veteran team, the starting five alone should be high priests and represent roughly half the total body fat of the entire ward. Unlike the priesthood, ward ball is not exclusively the domain of LDS men. Mormon women shoot hoops too. However, as it is with gentile roundball, few people pay attention to LDS women's sports. This has less to do with females' sports skills than it does with the female attitude about sports.

Mormon women don't usually take ward ball so seriously. It's not that women can't hold a grudge. I should know. I've had plenty held against me. For them, sports aren't episodes of bloody religious Jihad. Throw a few elbows in a women's game and they don't start a fight that requires a bishop and a fire hose to break up.

As mean-spirited and nasty as it sounds, ward-ball behavior has its roots set deep in the LDS faith. Ultrasecret modern-day revelation indicates that the War in Heaven started at a ward ballgame.

ROBERT KIRBY is a journalist who lives in Springville with three children and his wife. The self-described "New Age Mormon" welcomes e-mail at Compuserve (72733, 3260). This originally appeared in the Salt Lake Tribune, reprinted by permission.

# What you can learn from diaries.



Kenneth J. Godfrey calls *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*, edited by George D. Smith, "a work of true significance." Leonard J. Arrington finds Rebecca Bartholomew's *Audacious Women: Early British Mormon Immigrants* "thoughtful, well-informed, and perceptive." And Paul Swenson calls *Remembering Brad: On the Loss of a Son to AIDS*, by H. Wayne Schow (with journal entries by Brad Schow), "unusually honest, literate, complex, and poignant."

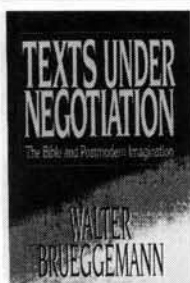
*Signature Books*

# A NEW WAY OF LOOKING AT SCRIPTURE

TEXTS UNDER NEGOTIATION:  
THE BIBLE AND POSTMODERN IMAGINATION

by Walter Brueggemann  
Fortress Press, 1993  
117 pages, \$10.00

Reviewed by James E. Faulconer



*Walter Brueggemann's postmodern approach to scripture replaces modern critical methods of interpretation with communal stories whose complex and ambiguous meaning subvert the culture of the world.*

**I**N 1974, Hans Frei wrote *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics*.<sup>1</sup> Though his book has had important effects in theology—in what is called narrative theology—few except theologians know the work. That is unfortunate, because Frei offers an alternative to our usual ways of understanding scriptural texts; he offers a way between the seemingly exclusive alternatives: reading scripture via the assumptions and methods of historical criticism, or defending it with the assumptions and methods of conservative religious ideology.

For me, the most important part of Frei's book is his discussion of the origins of currently dominant attitudes toward scripture interpretation. Those origins, he argues, are to be found in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century debates about how to understand the Bible. According to Frei, the problem with those debates is that both sides used the same assumptions about the nature of texts and interpretation (the assumptions of "modernism") and, thus, both groups ig-

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nored the possibility for understanding the Bible that we can see in premodern interpretation (interpretation prior to about 1500).

## THE PRECRITICAL APPROACH TO THE BIBLE

*Historical events weren't separated from the telling of a story, because there was no history separate from the meaning of history.*

**O**NE way to understand the difference between the modernist assumptions shared today by both conservative literalists and *historico-critical* biblical researchers is to see the difference between modern (critical) and premodern (precritical) understandings of "literal interpretation." For precritical interpreters, it is not too much to say that figural interpretation and literal interpretation are inextricably connected, while for critical interpreters (and we are critical interpreters, whether we are conservatives or liberals in interpretation), they are opposites. As we see it, we can give a figural or a literal interpretation of something, but we do not see them as supplementary to each other and, sometimes, even identical. Precritically, however, the figured

story was the literal truth. The word *literal* means "by the letter," so for the precritical interpreter, the literal truth was the truth told us by the text. But the word *literal* shifts in meaning between the medievals and the moderns. Effectively, the modern period reverses the direction of interpretation. In the precritical period, the narrative gave us access to history, so the literal truth was the truth told us by the text. Conversely, in the modern period, history gives us the criteria for deciding whether stories are true or false, so the literal truth is the truth that corresponds to objective history (which exists independent of the narratives that relate that history). Thus, for moderns, the narrative functions, at best, as evidence for, or a report of, the event. If we do not have immediate access to the event—as we cannot with historical events—then we must have a method for reconstructing, as accurately as possible, what an objective observation of it would give as its description. For moderns, the literal truth is the truth by which we judge the text instead of the truth told us by the text. The events are the standard for deciding the truth of texts. In contrast, precritically, the text is the standard for knowing and thinking about events; the figured narrative is not just a way for us to verify that a past event occurred. Rather, *the narrative—with its figures and the figures that connect it to other narratives—is the access, the only access, to the event itself.*

Because our world view is distinctly and thoroughly modern, this distinction is difficult to grasp. We tend to reduce the precritical version of literalism to contemporary conservative literalism. We think that precritical interpreters also believed that the text accurately describes the events to which it refers and that those events can, in principle, be known outside the text, preferably by immediate observation. Conservative modernists believe that scriptural narratives are an objective description of events; nonconservative modernists do not. We assume that the premodern position is just an earlier instance of the position taken by conservative modernists. Frei argues, however, that when we reduce precritical literalism to contemporary conservative literalism, we make the same mistake that religious people made when they were confronted with the attacks on scripture of such thinkers as Anthony Collins and Thomas Paine. With the eighteenth-century critics of the Bible, we assume that scriptural texts are and ought to be representations of events. We then argue about how accurately a text represents the event or events in question. For the precritical reader,



**The culture within which we live—and not Christianity itself—gives the framework within which we see and understand the possibilities for life. Christian scripture reading and faithful preaching is to disrupt the apparently seamless continuity of the dominant culture and to offer the possibility of a gospel culture.**

however, the Bible is not just the representation of various series of events. In fact, representation is probably not the best metaphor to use in describing what understanding meant precritically. Rather than being a representation—a re-presentation—of past events, for precritical readers, scripture gives the access to the events of history. It gives the events, their connection to each other, and the meaning of those events—none of which could be separated from the other. For a precritical reader, the figurative character of the scriptural text (the Book of Mormon's "types and shadows") is primarily what gives the events of the text their existence as meaningful events and their connection to one another.

Obviously, critical history must also choose between the events it will describe, and it must decide which features of those events are relevant. Shakespeare making a laundry list is not an event of the same significance as his writing *Hamlet*. Not choosing some events rather than others, and some features rather than others, would make history writing impossible. The question is, how do we choose what we decide to focus on? How do we decide the significance of events? Unlike precritical historians, modern historians believe that question can be answered apart from knowing the event itself: we can know the event, and we can decide its significance, but these are two different acts. For premodern readers, however, if you didn't see the figuration—the significance—then you didn't see the history. It isn't just that you didn't see the meaning of history. Since, precritically, there was no history separate from the meaning of history—separate from its figuration, from its "shape"—not to see the figures or to see them incorrectly was not to see accurately the history itself.<sup>2</sup> That is why narrative was the site of real history, why it acted as the standard for history and our understanding of history. For precritical understanding, the Bible tells us what really happened; it is our primary access to that happening. For the critical reader, however, the Bible is a reflection or description of what happened, but it is only one of many possible kinds of access to what happened. Since the figuration of precritical history is its meaning, according to Walter Brueggemann,

"the outcome of historical criticism is most often to provide a text that is palatable to modern rationality, but that in the process has been emptied of much that is most interesting, most poignant, and most 'disclosing' [most "truth-telling"] in the text" (58).

To sum up, this shift from the precritical to the critical marks a radical shift in the understanding of scriptural meaning: the text had been the standard for deciding the reliability of our understanding of the event. That is why precritical thinkers understood the Bible narrative as literal history: it told us what history was; it didn't just describe that history.<sup>3</sup> Critical histories, therefore, because they focus on description, will fail as approaches to precritical scriptural texts.

#### POSTMODERNISM

*Knowledge is essentially perspectival. But it doesn't follow that whatever I believe to be true is true or that nothing is true.*

NARRATIVE theologians such as Walter Brueggemann<sup>4</sup> have taken up Frei's work, and they have asked what it would mean for us to understand scriptural texts not critically, but as narrative. To Frei's concern, Brueggemann, like others, has added an interest in "postmodernism," which should not be surprising, given the anti-modernist stance of Frei's work. Brueggemann agrees with Frei that contemporary scriptural interpretation—whether liberal or conservative—is very much a modernist matter. It is "interpretation informed by historical criticism" (1). In other words, interpretation requires one to use the methods of historical science. Modernism is marked by several things,<sup>5</sup> but particularly important to those interested in scriptural interpretation is modernism's understanding of knowledge. For modernists, knowledge is mathematical or quasi-mathematical certainty, and we get certainty by using a method. (René Descartes is the exemplar here. See his "Discourse on Method and Meditations.") To be a science is to have a method for achieving certainty. Using the work of Stephen Toulmin, Brueggemann points out that modernism can be described as moving the location of knowledge from the oral to the written, from the particular to

the universal, from the local to the general, and from the timely to the timeless—with the quest for certainty at its heart (5).

In the late twentieth century, we have seen much discussion of postmodernism in academic circles, and much of that discussion has been ill-informed and merely trendy, speaking as if we could exorcise the supposed demons of modernism by chanting postmodern mantras against such bogeymen as "totalizing." In spite of the silliness of much of that discussion,<sup>6</sup> an important point lurks behind it. In Brueggemann's and Toulmin's terms, in the late twentieth century, we see what appears to be a reversal of the movement of modernism, a relocation of knowledge in the oral more than the written, in the particular more than the universal, in the local more than the general, in the timely more than the timeless, and so on.<sup>7</sup> Brueggemann wants us to think about what such a reversal—or, better, reversing—of modernism (in which it is implicit that the historical method will not do for understanding scripture) could mean for scriptural interpretation.

Brueggemann spends most of his book explaining the theoretical background for the alternative he would like us to consider. Besides Toulmin, he relies on the work of philosophers such as Thomas Kuhn and Michael Polanyi, as well as those more frequently thought of as postmodern thinkers (such as Jean-François Lyotard). Brueggemann argues three points: (1) knowledge is necessarily contextual; (2) contexts are local—to move to a generalization is to move away from context; and (3) knowledge is, therefore, pluralistic (8–9).

To insist on the contextual character of knowledge is directly to attack modernism's demand for acontextual knowledge. However, contra the usual criticism of postmodernism, we must notice that to insist on the contextual character of knowledge is not the same as to insist on relativism (at least not as relativism is most often thought of). Following Nietzsche, postmodern thinkers argue that knowledge is essentially perspectival. It does not, however, follow that whatever I believe to be true is true or (which is the same) that nothing is true. Consider an analogy: I stand on one side of a vase and an-

other person stands on the other. Necessarily, to see the vase is to see it from a perspective. But it doesn't follow that I can describe the vase in any way I want. There are constraints on what I can truthfully say about it, even from my perspective—among other things, the vase constrains me.<sup>8</sup> As Brueggemann says, the point is that "the world is perceived, processed, and articulated with one or another perspective, and a perspective has the power to make sense out of the rawness of experienced life" (11). In fact, on this view, one cannot make sense of experience *apart from* perspective. To do so would be like insisting that I know a vase only when I can see it, impossibly, from every possible point of view.<sup>9</sup>

Besides taking seriously the idea that knowledge is contextual, much of Brueggemann's theoretical alternative is founded, though indirectly, on Edmund Husserl's related insight that understanding is always understanding *as*. Contrary to our common description of perception, when I see a chair, I don't see a group of colors and shapes and then make a judgment that, collectively, these are a chair. Rather, I simply see a chair in the first place. To see is always to see something or other—in this case, a chair. It is to see "as." The contemporary American philosopher, Wilfred Sellars, makes a similar point: to see red is to "see redly." When I read, I read a text as a particular kind of text, with a particular kind of

meaning. Even to read a text that I find difficult to understand is to read it as one kind of text rather than another. In fact, to understand it as a text rather than a chair or vase is already an interpretive act. Contrary to modernism's assumption, understanding is not added to observation, which is pure or objective. Instead, to observe something is, from the first and necessarily, to understand it in some way or another, to take it as something.<sup>10</sup>

#### THE ROLE OF SCRIPTURE

*The point of scripture is to subvert the dominant world culture and offer an alternative world.*

**O**UR lives and social relationships are made possible and significant and effective—in other words, they are structured—by the stories, ordinances, procedures, practices, signs, habits, and so on that create the shape, nuance, and possibility of our lives (27). Much of the "as-structure" of experience comes from the shape given life by these stories, ordinances, procedures, practices, signs, and habits. To a large degree, I see the world as it is given to me by my society. Brueggemann's thesis is that we find in scripture reading "a counter-'as' to the long accepted 'as' that is widely and uncritically accepted as objectively real" (and that, presumably, often goes under the name, "Christianity") (15). What we yearn for and

need is "not new doctrine or new morality, but new world, new self, new future" (25). By opening the possibility of different stories, ordinances, and habits, scripture opens up the possibility of different lives. The problem is that Christians—including Christian leaders and interpreters of scripture—often rely without thinking on the dominant cultural stories, habits, and so on. That is not so much a criticism as it is a fact of life. We live in the world and, because we do, we also live of the world. We condemn this or that aspect of our culture because what we condemn goes against our religious beliefs. In doing so, we have difficulty seeing that, most often, the culture within which we live—and not Christianity itself—gives the framework within which we see and understand the possibilities for life that we take up or reject (27). Even in our religious lives we are often shaped by nonreligious forces, forces perhaps even antithetical to our religious lives. Even our criticisms of the culture are usually made from within the framework of that culture; culture gives us the alternatives between which we choose. The scriptures are to call us to repentance, to life in Jesus Christ; if I put that in the jargon of contemporary philosophy I would say that the point of Christian scripture reading and faithful preaching is to disrupt the apparently seamless continuity of the dominant culture (whatever it is) and to offer the possibility of a gospel culture. The point of scripture study and preaching is to make possible an alternative to "the world." Coming to us through scripture, preaching, and (for Latter-day Saints) continuing revelation, the gospel is the good news that we *can* live differently. In spite of the ideological problems that may remain within the Bible because it was written by human beings, it has the power to radically reconstrue and recontextualize reality and, therefore, our lives. To be a Christian is to believe that conversion, not just rearrangement, is possible.

For Brueggemann, as for Frei, it follows that we should not treat scriptural texts as scientific history. In fact, there is a very real sense in which we cannot do so and still treat them as scripture. This does *not* mean that the scriptures are not history, real history. The argument is that scientific history is not the only kind of history nor even necessarily the best. We have seen that scientific history is written from within a world view that assumes that texts are representative and that one important question to ask about them is, "How accurate are the representations they make?" However, scripture claims to be not representative, but presen-



***What one says about divine matters must include the recognition that to speak and write about God and godly things rather than about oneself and one's own or the community's imagination is to speak and write only within a space opened and made possible by those who have divine authority.***

tative.<sup>11</sup> The scriptures give us a temporal reality—a history—by which we can know and judge the world itself as well as particular representations of the world. They claim to be an original presentation of reality, not a more or less accurate representation of an independently existing reality. Scripture and scientific history are, therefore, not just two different views about the world; they are mutually exclusive views. If scripture gives us the world the way it is, then scientific history—whether conservative, fundamentalist creationism, or “liberal” historical criticism—is relatively useless to us interpretively.

Given that scripture is a “counter-‘as’” to the perspectives we take up in the normal course of events, the point of scripture reading is the subversion of those normal perspectives. The job of the teacher is to open scripture in such a way that it can subvert “normal”—in Christian terms, *worldly*—understanding. But the teacher must do so without having decided in advance just how that subversion will take place or what insights she and her audience will gain from it. She cannot assume that she already knows what is to be learned. The preacher or teacher faces the problem of making it possible for scripture to do its work without simply forcing his or her perspectives onto the scriptures and the audience.<sup>12</sup> Thus, Brueggemann describes the process of scriptural interpretation (though not its ontological status) as analogous to the process of Freudian psychotherapy<sup>13</sup>: (1) Like therapeutic talk, insightful talk about scripture “depends on going underneath the visible structures . . . to the little, specific details that hold power over us.” (2) Like the therapist, “the pastor does not see or know everything in advance, but lives patiently and faithfully while the new pieces of disclosure surface and do their work.” And (3), we are most often settled into orthodoxies of our society and culture, such as “a thin suburban morality of competence and success” or “an orthodoxy of liberal social causes.” In the face of that self-comfort, the scriptures can “trigger an insight, a connection, an illumination that heals” by breaking us out of our comfort and showing us the world differently (21–22; 59–60).

I have some nits to pick with Brueggemann’s characterization of the theory that underlies the approach he recommends. For example, in discussing the “as-function” of understanding, he neglects the fact that things are considerably more complicated than he portrays them. After all, “seeing-as” is seeing both universally and locally, not just locally. To understand knowledge in terms of *as* is to subvert with perspectival knowledge the modernist claim that the goal of knowledge is universality. But it is *not* to subvert universal knowledge *per se*, where *universal* doesn’t mean “aperspectival,” but does mean “shareable”—transcendental, though not transcendent (to use Kant’s terms). The word *universal* does not mean the same as *acontextual*, though we, like the Enlightenment, often assume that it does. I also think that Brueggemann’s insistence on the inability of any viewpoint to claim privilege subtly contradicts his insistence on the power of Christianity to engage us and make demands on us. He recognizes that agreement is not merely a matter of convention, but he fails to deal with the problem of possibly radically different perspectival claims and the power of some claims to outweigh others. In spite of these nits, I generally agree with Brueggemann’s intentions and his arguments.

#### LDS IMPLICATIONS

*We need authority without authoritarianism to create any space for religious discourse.*

FOR a Latter-day Saint, however, Brueggemann misses one important question—the question of authority in interpretation. Brueggemann has ignored the question of what authorizes interpretations. For him, there is little question. He is, after all, a Protestant. In that, he continues to be committed to the Enlightenment, which has as one of its hallmarks the rejection of any authority but that of “Reason.”<sup>14</sup> But Latter-day Saint understanding seeks a way between the potential anarchy of the Protestant insistence on the individual and her autonomy, and the potential authoritarianism of Catholicism—something that, as Doctrine and Covenants 121 reminds us, al-

ways (perhaps necessarily) threatens those who have authority. The problem of authority has several dimensions: First, if there is no authority, then how do we decide between conflicting interpretations? We may want a manifold of interpretations. I think we should “let a thousand flowers bloom.” However, even if we allow and encourage a manifold of interpretations, not *every* interpretation is possible. Alma 32 is not a recipe for pound cake. How do we avoid the private, or in other words, merely individual, interpretation that scripture tells us is impossible? (See 2 Pet. 1:20.) Second, whatever our answer to the first question, how do we avoid making scriptural interpretation merely a matter of psychological or emotional response? In other words, how do we avoid making our interpretations nothing more than, as Feuerbach described religion, a projection of human desires and needs, whether individual or collective? We might avoid private interpretation by allowing the community and its tradition to authorize interpretations, but that would not remove the possibility that our interpretations were still *only* a matter of wish-fulfillment, the expression of the community’s consciousness and historical development (rather than the individual’s). In that case, we would have only the kind of authority that was rightly rejected by the Enlightenment. The question is, how do we avoid falling into the trap of individual authority, or in other words, anarchy, on the one hand, or nothing but traditional authority with its tendency toward oppression, on the other?

The contemporary Catholic thinker Jean-Luc Marion argues that to be religious is to believe that—at some level—one’s experience comes from beyond the individual and the community, from the Person outside this world.<sup>15</sup> Marion argues that in order to distinguish between that which God has to say to us and that which we attribute to God (whether as individuals or as communities) there must be unspeakable, *divine* authority. The interpretations we offer, just as the ordinances we perform, can escape the possibility that they are nothing more than expressions of individual or communal consciousness only if they recognize and incorporate the authority that makes them



possible. That is not to say that one can say only what one is told to say by a priesthood authority. To take that position would substitute authoritarianism for authority. But neither is it to leave interpretation up to the individual. To say that interpretations must recognize the authority that authorizes them is to say that what one says about divine matters must include the recognition that to speak and write about God and godly things rather than about oneself and one's own or the community's imagination is to speak and write only within a space opened and made possible by those who have divine authority, those through whom God speaks.<sup>16</sup> One can disagree with the bishop, stake president, or members of the Twelve, but unless such disagreements occur within the space that is "authorized" (created) by the Divine, within the space opened by those with divine authority acting in that authority, then they are simple rebellion. Without minimizing the fact that those who are appointed as priesthood authorities can abuse divine authority, quickly and easily substituting their will and imagination for that of God, I agree with Marion that interpretation of scripture, as all theology, demands holiness, and holiness demands authority that comes not only from beyond oneself, but also from beyond one's community and tradition.<sup>17</sup> To use philosophical jargon again, authority must come from the Other, from beyond context and culture. To recognize that is to recognize the proper place and importance of authority.

#### APPLICATIONS

*How to read scripture to open up a place of vision and memory/covenant/hope.*

**M**Y final criticism of Brueggemann's book is that while it gives an interesting and accessible discussion of the possibility of a new way of looking at scripture, it gives us too little by way of practical application. Taking a cue from Martin Heidegger, Brueggemann focuses the scrip-

tural studies in his book on the question of time. Unlike the Enlightenment and rationalist view, for Christians, the world is not just the present world, for which the past is something to overcome and the future is to be brought into the present as quickly as possible by the maximization of technology. For Christians, the past and the future are ontologically crucial to the present, not adjunct: the origin of life is divine, and that divine origin (the past) must constantly be remembered; the point of life is consummation with God, and that consummation (future) must always be anticipated and hoped for (28). Technologism and consumerism—the reigning bastard children of the Enlightenment—banish both creation and consummation by reducing them only to manifestations of the present. As Book of Mormon writers make clear, memory and anticipation are necessary to Christian understanding. Consider that speakers in the Book of Mormon most commonly begin their sermons by remembering. They may recall Moses and Israel (e.g., 1 Ne. 17:23 ff.) or Lehi (e.g., Alma 9:7 ff.), but memory is an explicit part of their preaching and teaching. Similarly, it is impossible to avoid the degree to which Book of Mormon sermons are matters of hope and anticipation.

Brueggemann also argues that, contra modernism, Christians do not simply understand the present as the "now" point. Instead, the present is "a readiness to receive life from the other, from God and neighbor, rather than from self" (54). It is the moment—the movement—of fidelity to the covenant that one takes on from God and the neighbor. Though for modernism the past and future are ordered by the "now" (we must make the past now to understand it or for it to have effect—the future is what comes out of that which we do now), for the Christian the "now" is ordered by Christian memory and hope. We and the world are figured by memory and hope, and thus, so are our scriptural texts.

This figuration by memory and hope is what makes the distinction between mere authoritarianism and genuine authority possible. Genuine authority is to be found not in pronouncements or pronouncers as such, but in the ordinances that come to us as gifts, bringing together Christian memory and hope in the space of faith and covenant. "Authorized" space—according to the Latin root, the space provided, the space of increase and advancement—is the space opened from beyond culture by the appearance in culture of ordinance. Pronouncements and those who pronounce get their authority from and within ordinance; ordinance is authority, the gift of increase from the Divine.<sup>18</sup> Ordinance provides order, not the reverse.

Continuing to differentiate the Christian perspective from that of the Enlightenment and its contemporary heirs by looking carefully and imaginatively at passages of scripture, Brueggemann shows that Christian memory does not serve to *explain* the past. Thus, the Judeo-Christian memory of creation is incomparable with scientific memories of the earth's origins. The scientific account serves to explain why the world presently is as it is, given particular methodological parameters. In contrast, the Judeo-Christian account is a response to our existence: "It pushes the reason for one's existence out beyond one's self to find that reason in an inexplicable, inscrutable, loving generosity that redefines all our modes of reasonableness" (29). Similarly, the Christian vision of the future affirms that, in its very being, the world is not finished, that we have charitable work to do, and that the Christian vision of the present is the vision of a world in which we are lovingly covenanted to all others—ontologically obligated.

Brueggemann gives several suggestions for reading scriptures to allow them to open a vision and place of memory/covenant/hope. Focusing on the "little story" rather than the big picture, he tells us: (1) don't

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worry about creating a systematic theology; (2) we may have to ignore or even "violate much we have learned in historical criticism" (58); (3) we should read in a "Jewish" rather than Hellenistic way—in other words, we should read to honor "the ambiguity, complexity, and affront of the text without too much worry about making it palatable" (59); and (4) as mentioned, we should understand scriptural exegesis in an analogy to Freudian psychotherapeutic techniques.<sup>19</sup> Brueggemann also suggests that we think of scripture as the text for a drama that we must act out in concert with others.

I believe that Brueggemann's third suggestion encompasses the rest. More successfully than has its Christian counterparts, Jewish scriptural interpretation has avoided falling into the traps laid for us by modernism. It isn't concerned particularly about systematic theology, it often ignores or violates critical history without embarrassment, it looks for unapparent meanings, and it is very much a part of living a religious life with others. For many Jews, Torah (including Talmud) remains the expression of what the world is

and how it should be seen rather than an objective or, alternatively, metaphoric description of what things there are. Thus, I suggest that a revised version of four rules for Talmudic interpretation may help us do what Brueggemann proposes better than do his suggestions:

1. The statements of the scriptural texts are *the* source material in the search for divine truth.<sup>20</sup>
2. We must assume that scripture means exactly what it says, and, even more important, we must assume that we do not already know what it says.
3. We must focus on the differences between scriptural texts as well as on the similarities, looking to see what those differences teach us.
4. To avoid remaining locked into our pre-given understandings and interpretations, we must assume that each aspect of the text is significant and ask about that significance.

My suggestions, like Brueggemann's, remain general, however. Though followed by the interpretation of several, short scriptural

studies, readings<sup>21</sup> that help us think about the past as memory, the future as anticipation, and the present as covenantal fidelity, Brueggemann's suggestions for how to read scripture are insufficient. Presumably, one can see what he is doing in these interpretations. But I would like to have seen more interpretations so I would know better how to imitate such reading myself. In the end, Brueggemann tantalizes us with an introduction to the philosophical justification for his alternative approach to scripture,<sup>22</sup> and he provides a morsel or two of that alternative, but he should have also given us a book devoted to the interpretations themselves. Perhaps that follows in the future; at least we can hope for it. ☞

#### NOTES

1. Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

2. Of course, this does not mean that ancient writers could not distinguish between fiction and history. The point is that, for biblical writers, figuration was as much a part of history—as essential to it—as it was a part of and essential to fiction. Figuration did not distinguish history from fiction.

3. Another profound and important difference between the

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precritical and critical understanding of biblical discourse is that for precritical readers the interpreter was important. Precritically, it was not thought true that everyone had equal access, through reason, to understanding the text. That is an Enlightenment idea, identical with the notion that all persons are equally endowed with natural reason, a notion that had praiseworthy, liberating effects as well as abominable, oppressive ones. Colonialism and imperialism were very much justified by that notion and the concomitant observation that not everyone thought the way that Europeans did. Without going any further down that tangential road, let it suffice to say that for precritical readers, truthful understanding of biblical history required a faithful interpreter. As the Enlightenment was well aware, that also had its oppressive effects, often noted in the refusal of the church to let any but the educated clergy read or interpret the Bible. It is not clear, however, that we understand precritical understandings of interpretation if we reduce them to their oppressive uses. And making such a reduction tends to be part of excusing our own interpretive imperialsms.

4. In addition to Brueggemann, those writing about narrative theology include T. Altizer, R. M. Brown, S. Hauerwas, F. Kerr, N. Lash, A. Louth, J. Navone, and perhaps S. Handelman. Though not herself a narrative theologian, E. Wyschogrod does related, interesting work in *Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy*. There she argues that we understand what it means to be moral via narratives rather than through sets of moral rules, and she presents arguments against the usual ways that academics and, consequently, others deal with ethical and moral questions. The arguments she makes for her position and against those of others are, by analogy, useful in this discussion as well as interesting in their own right.

5. Stephen Daniel gives a helpful description of modernism:

The designation "modern" does not refer to a period in history as much as to a constellation of positions (e.g., a rational demand for unity, certainty, universality, and ultimacy) and beliefs (e.g., the belief that words, ideas, and things are distinct entities; the belief that the world represents a fixed object of analysis separate from forms of human discourse and cognitive representations; the belief that culture is subsequent to nature and that society is subsequent to the individual). ("Paramodern Strategies of Philosophical Historiography," *Epoch* 1.1 [fall 1994], 41-63.)

6. But it must also be noted that most of the attacks on postmodernism have been equally silly, attacking straw soldiers, or dealing with postmodernism's serious questions about modernism and objectivity by pretending that those questions can simply be ignored.

7. Some who talk about postmodernism, deconstructionism, etc., speak as if we are at the dawn of a new age (and much trendy postmodernism is difficult to distinguish from other New Age silliness). Oddly enough, in doing so, they make a distinctly modernist move: they announce the dawn or rebirth of real knowledge and learning. Many so-called postmodernists are hardly less enthusiastic or confident than were the first Westerners to condemn the supposed evil and ignorance of their own (medieval) past, namely the initiators of modernism, of the Renaissance. As J.-L. Marion says, "He [sic] who pretends to go beyond a metaphysics must produce thereby another thought. And he who pretends to go beyond all metaphysics most often risks taking up again, without being conscious of it, its basic characteristic" (*God without Being*, [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991] 165).

Brueggemann is more careful and responsible than those who blindly repeat modernism in criticizing it. He recognizes that even thoughtful postmodernism may, as J. Habermas has argued, actually be only a move within modernism (2). He is not concerned to show us the glory that lies before us or to reject the past. He wants us to consider an alternative way of thinking about scriptural interpretation.

The questioning of modernism (and it is important to remember that to question is not necessarily to reject) gives us reason to consider alternatives for interpretation, but there is an additional reason to do so, one that should appeal to Latter-day Saints. Brueggemann quotes L. Gilkey: "A good case can be made that the spiritual substance of the Enlightenment took its shape against the Hebrew and the Christian myths or salvation history" (7). In other words, modernism's various emphases and its untempered rejection of authority were, in large part, a rejection of the insights and understandings of biblical religion. It was, after all, the moderns who called the previous eras of Christian learning and understanding the "Dark Ages" and meant by that little more than "not us."

8. Some contemporary thinkers have been concerned about how the image of knowledge as sight influences our understanding. Levinas, for example, argues that the image tends toward a kind of egoism. Though I understand the concern and to

some degree share it, we can leave that worry aside for our present purposes.

9. The LDS doctrine of God's embodiment has interesting implications for this discussion, since embodiment necessarily implies a perspective. Modernism wants humans to have the view that had previously been supposed to be the view of God, the "view" from every perspective. It would be fruitful to pursue the question of what implications the belief in God's embodiment has for our understanding of divine knowledge.

10. One way to make the point is to say that we must not confuse perception with physiology. Our common description of perception may say something about the physiology of perception, but it says nothing about perception itself, unless we beg the question and reduce perception to physiology. What happens in the experience of seeing is not the same thing as what happens to my body when I see.

11. This view shares with Marxist, feminist, African American, and other views critical of the status quo, the understanding that modernism's objectivity is no less presentative than is any other understanding of the world. But modernism hides its presentative character behind the veil of objectivity, behind its claim to be merely representative. Objectivity presents a particular way of understanding the world—not necessarily a way that should be rejected outright, but certainly not a way of representing that stands apart from the values, ideologies, political motivations, and social situations of the person or persons making the supposed re-presentation. Objectivity, though not useless, dissimulates its presentative character.

12. This problem of criticizing that within which one stands is at the origin of deconstruction: We want to talk about our tradition or a text within that tradition, we even want to criticize it. But we have no standpoint from which to do so but the tradition itself. We must, therefore, find a way of using the tradition or text against itself. (For an early, helpful description of deconstruction, see Martin Heidegger, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982], 19-23.) For people like Brueggemann, scripture provides such a lever: it is within the tradition and so can always be completely accommodated to or appropriated by it. But scripture also offers the possibility of doing and saying more than the tradition; it offers an "alternative" to the tradition from within the tradition.

13. I think it more accurate to think of Freudian psychotherapy as resembling scriptural interpretation. It is conceivable that Freud's Jewish heritage expresses itself in such a connection.

14. The criticisms of the Enlightenment's rejection of au-

thority are numerous. The most general form in which the criticism can be put is, perhaps, this: those who criticize authority fail to recognize that they necessarily rely on something else as an authority, something that remains hidden to them and, therefore, that exercises far more authority over them than would any recognized authority. For an excellent discussion of the problem with the Enlightenment's rejection of authority—but a discussion that does not leave us only mindlessly to obey whomever has been placed over us—see Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 271-85; and (as a corrective to common misinterpretations of Gadamer as an advocate of the status quo) Gerald Bruns, "Structuralism, Deconstruction, Hermeneutics," in *Diacritics* 14 (1984): 12-23.

15. Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being* (Chicago University Press, 1991), 153ff.

16. To be fair to Brueggemann and Protestantism, I should note that he would probably say that the inspired individual is the one through whom God speaks, and that individual access to inspiration is the source of authority. However, with Catholics, Latter-day Saints believe there is more to authority than that, though neither believes that we can ignore the possibility of individual inspiration. The authority of inspiration is necessary, but not sufficient.

17. In fact, I think abuses of priesthood power are so serious because—at precisely the place where one is obligated to recognize the divine and a power greater than one's own—abuse of priesthood power substitutes the will of the person for the will of God. Those who abuse priesthood power and those who rebel against it are of a kind: each puts his or her will in place of the will of God. Abusers and rebels alike substitute receiving God's will for wreaking their own.

18. See Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being*, 170ff.

19. Since figural interpretation is perhaps the oldest form of interpretation, this comparison of scripture reading to psychotherapy may strike some as at least anachronistic. I take it that Brueggemann's comparison is a heuristic device for readers who may be more likely to understand psychotherapeutic techniques than figural interpretation.

20. I include what comes through continuing revelation as scriptural text.

21. Readings of Exodus 11:19, Deuteronomy 15:1-11, 1 Samuel 16:1-13, Jeremiah 4:23-26, Isaiah 55:1-3, and Proverbs 15:17.

22. Whether on his own principles such a justification should be necessary is another question. It seems, however, at least heuristically necessary in the present situation.



## OPHIR AND EUREKA

The wood was still smoking when I walked by,  
 Though whoever spent the night had absconded.  
 Some sort of arbitrary dumpsite, sagebrush and cedar  
 Latticed by human-sign: bedsprings, paint buckets,  
 And a woman's shoe—one the Seventies called  
 Earth shoe, the leather still whole but stiff  
 With decades of fire and ice—further from the road  
 Dwindling to hair ribbons, green bottle shards, rings  
 Of campfire rocks. From the ridge  
 It might have been a moonscape, astronaut droppings  
 In dune buggy ruts, left an eon ago on museum display.  
 Still the grass was pushing through, the rabbits  
 Claimed the tractor tires against the hawks:  
 And though from here it looked the worse for wear,  
 God, it seemed, was none the wiser.

—C. WADE BENTLEY



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Compiled by Will Quist

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*Note: For future columns, we would like information about non-English Mormon books.*

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## NEWS

## BYU PROFESSOR UNDER FIRE FOR VIOLENT BOOK

WITH THE dust still settling from Brigham Young University's recent explosive academic freedom debates (which included the termination of two faculty members), some say another eruption is looming. A young associate professor of English and a dark, violent, new book are at the center of this latest controversy.

Early in 1994, shortly after earning a double Ph.D. in literature and critical theory from the University of Washington, Brian Evenson was hired as an associate English professor at BYU. During the intervening sixteen months, he has seen his Alfred A. Knopf-published book, *Altmann's Tongue*, receive both national acclaim—including a \$20,000 fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts—and local vilification. On the dust jacket, the collection of short stories and a novella is touted as "strangely fascinating," "brutal," and "chilling." Juxtaposed with those descriptions, Evenson is described as a "devout Mormon," an "unequivocal believer," a father of two little girls, and a faculty member at BYU. "In other words," the publisher writes, "Evenson appears, in every particular, to be the very destroyer of what—in this most shocking book—he is instead the maker of."

**An Anonymous Letter.** Like some other BYU faculty controversies, the twenty-eight-year-old writer's trouble began when an anonymous student sent a letter to the university's general authority-led board of trustees, decrying *Altmann's Tongue* as a "showcase of graphic, disgusting, pointless violence." (Some administrators know the identity of the letter writer, but Evenson was told only that she is a female

graduate student in English.) She wrote that reading the book made her "feel like someone who has eaten something poisonous and is in desperate need to get rid of it." She also said she was "terrified" that someone like Evenson could be hired at BYU. "As Latter-day Saints and hopefully disciples of the Lord, Jesus Christ, I believe we have a responsibility to use our gifts to bless the world with truth and hope—not revel in darkness and degradation," she added.

The letter, passed down through the university hierarchy, reached Evenson in mid-November (about six weeks after it was written) through a meeting with English Department Chair Jay Fox. According to Evenson's written account of their meeting (Fox asked him to document it for the administration), Fox reportedly told Evenson that he found the book "perplexing" and the writing "very sophisticated" but that the university would probably not support Evenson if he published a second book of similar content. Fox told Evenson that the department values him but that he is "on a collision course," and unless he is willing to change his writing, he would likely be let go at his third-year review. Fox also asked Evenson to write a letter to the unnamed student, responding to her allegations.

During that same meeting, Evenson defended the moral nature of *Altmann's Tongue*, explaining that he was "trying to jar people into a moral reevaluation of that which otherwise floats over them unexamined." One of the major concerns Evenson expressed was that the letter had passed through so many administrators' hands before reaching him. Evenson said he thought

the anonymous letter either should have been discarded or sent from the general authority who received it directly to the department chair. "I indicated that I had no difficulty in having the letter pass back up the line of authority in company with my response, but that to have it pass down alone was unfair and might cause legal problems for the University [if it affects my standing]," he wrote. Evenson also said it was ironic that BYU would have reservations about the book when representative portions from it had been included with his application materials and when he had read portions of it to a "good part of the faculty" during an on-campus employment interview. "If there were complaints to be made, they should have been made at that time," Evenson wrote.

**Publish and Perish?** After the meeting, Fox wrote a 16 January 1995 memo to Academic Vice President Todd Britsch, expressing "serious concerns" about the book, adding, "The bottom line is that [Evenson] knows that this book is unacceptable coming from a BYU faculty member and that further publications like it will bring repercussions." Fox said he also worried that the violence in the stories "might be imitated by an impressionable and unstable reader." When Evenson sought clarification from Britsch about whether Fox's statement reflected just the department chair's opinion or that of board members, Fox dissembled. Later, BYU spokesperson Brent Harker told the Associated Press that Fox, who has declined all interview requests, now regrets the statement and wants it known that nobody has threatened Evenson's job. That situation apparently changed several weeks later, when Evenson met with BYU President Rex E. Lee, Provost



Evenson could lose his job over conflicting interpretations of what makes fiction moral.

Bruce C. Hafen, Fox, and Humanities Dean Randall L. Jones. Evenson told the AP that the meeting was helpful in that he now knows where BYU really stands. "There were a couple of remedies" suggested in the meeting, Evenson said. "One would be not to publish other works that might be offensive to them. And the second would be that I could go elsewhere."

**A Moral Text?** Meanwhile, Evenson elaborated on the use of violence in *Altmann's Tongue* in his letter to the anonymous student. Evenson wrote that the book is an attempt to "paint violence in its true colors and to let it reveal for itself how terrible it is. I neither support the violence nor glamorize it; I show it strictly for what it is, to let it condemn itself." Evenson writes that his book doesn't glorify evil like some recent movies do. "My violence is a kind of violence that you can't cheer for. Movies glamorize killing. My book, however, shows how pointless violence is." Evenson explained that he wrote the book while he was in a bishopric, often praying about it. "The book is a difficult one, one which demands new ways of reading, and one not for everybody, yet it is worthwhile," he wrote. "It is, I firmly believe, a justified book and an oddly



moral book." This moral perspective is "not imposed upon the work like propaganda but is subtly woven through the whole fabric of the work."

Evenson, who says he has been influenced by writers like Beckett, Kafka, and Camus and music like that by The Fall, Tom Waits, and Severed Heads, adds that ultimately he hopes readers will see that, stripped of all justifying rhetoric, "violence is not fun, violence is not entertainment, violence hurts people, kills people, ruins lives, and finally makes no sense. . . . Violence of all kinds is diametrically opposed to Christ, and when we accept violence as justified, we participate in the moral decline of the world."

Ever protective of his protégé, Gordon Lish, editor of the literary journal *The Quarterly* and Evenson's editor at Knopf, told the AP that BYU's position seems untenable for a university, especially one with a motto that reads, "The Glory of God Is Intelligence." "They want the man to think thoughts that would be congruent with their wishes, which I find so entirely hostile to what it is to be an American and what it is to be an artist," he said. "I would think it also would be hostile to the notions of what it is to be a Christian." Lish also told the AP he believes Evenson "will produce himself as one of the major writers of the twenty-first century."

**The Campus Climate.** Of course, these events play into the sense of fear that already permeates parts of BYU's campus. "I get nervous as a writer when I see another writer getting censored," Bruce Jorgensen, another BYU English professor, told the *Deseret News*. "It does make me anxious—it makes it harder to write." Jorgensen also said he was confused by why the student would want to turn a personal offense into a public, institutional problem. He told the *News* that Christ's New Testament words teach that a man should

deal with problems with another directly, so that both could be edified. "It really disappoints me to see that another member of the church would fail to follow this counsel," he said. BYU employee Glenn Anderson, in a letter published in *BYU's Daily Universe*, agrees with Jorgensen: "For this student to have gone directly to a general authority of the Church violates" our religious standard of settling offenses "between him or her and thee alone." The other question bothering Anderson is that of how far the administration will go in regulating art and literature on campus.

All of this has placed the BYU administration in a very difficult position. Letters to the editor, like Anderson's, assert that this is just another BYU blunder that further tarnishes the University's academic reputation, not to mention its effect on the worth of a BYU degree and students' graduate school opportunities; other letters defend the University's right to limit academic freedom and texts published by BYU professors. In an interview with the *Student Review*, BYU's unofficial campus paper, BYU spokesperson Brent Harker made it clear that at least one board member has strong opinions about the book and has passed them on to BYU administrators. "Obviously we as an institution are struggling with it. This is tough. Brian is a gifted writer, the publisher is a premier publisher, and Brian's objectives and purposes are sincere. . . . This is a moral act for him," Harker told the AP.

However, Harker told the *Review* that BYU wasn't too concerned by the negative publicity. "The hiring of graduates only gets better and better over the years," he said. "These controversies that come and go affect different audiences in different ways. They tend to reinforce the support of the tithing payers and tend to alienate a certain segment of the public that doesn't like us anyway, and never paid a penny to support the institution." Harker also pointed out that

when you think about BYU's reputation, you have to think about its various audiences. "Our most important audience is the board of trustees, then the students and the tithing members," he told the *Review*. But at the same time, "It is not our desire to censure the book," Harker emphasized in an interview with the *News*. "The question is, does BYU want to be a party in the production of more books like this one? This is a difficult dilemma to an institution like us that has an honor code. . . . We must now decide when violence becomes obscene, and that's not an easy thing to do."

#### **Holding BYU Accountable.**

Like it or not, BYU may soon have to face that question: Evenson is dedicated to his work; he writes nightly from midnight to two A.M. and recently completed his second book, *Dark Property*. (The NEA grant will help him finish his third book, the mystery novel *Pergolesi's Death*, a draft of which has been completed.) Evenson says two of *Dark Property's* three novellas are much less violent—but the third and central story rivals any of the brutality of *Altmann's Tongue*.

Although Evenson told the *News* that he believes this confrontation, which is now being handled on the departmental level, could have the capacity to turn into a heated confrontation, he says he doesn't want it to.

Neither does the university, Harker says. "We didn't plan for this to be a public struggle," Harker told the *News*. "We need to talk to Brian directly and for Brian to have access to the administration. But I don't expect this to come to any immediate official action. I don't think it will come to a confrontation, either."

Nonetheless, confrontation may be hard to avoid. "The fact [is] that they don't see it as an academic freedom issue, and to me, that's absurd," Evenson told the *News*. "If it's not a problem that deals directly with academic freedom, then I don't know what it is."

Even though Evenson is on a year-to-year trial contract and could be let go at any time, Harker told Salt Lake City's *Event* newspaper that Evenson is "not in immediate jeopardy." Ultimately, his fate will be decided "by a committee of his peers—not by President Rex Lee or the Board of Trustees dictating a decision—and that's a three-year process," Harker said. And despite the fact that he needs the support of Fox and Jones to have any chance of receiving continuing status (tenure), Evenson says he plans to see *Dark Property* through to publication. "I'll start looking for jobs, but I am very tempted to stay here and play this out," he told the AP, "because I think BYU needs to be accountable for these kinds of things like other universities." ☐

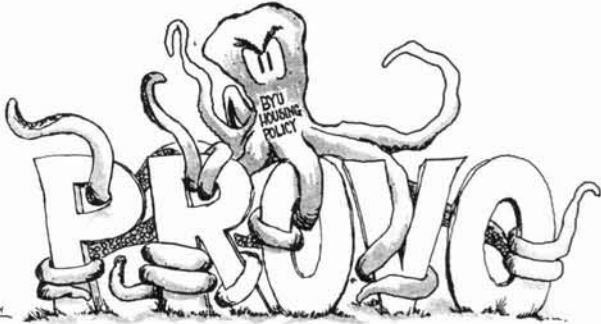
## ANXIOUSLY ENGAGED

- The Church, at the beginning of the year, through twenty-six different religious and charitable organizations, donated over seventy-nine tons of food to help the hungry in **Atlanta, Ga.**
- Recently, more than 3,000 families in **eastern Russia** have received 160,000 pounds of food, 40,000 pounds of winter clothing, and 2,000 blankets donated by the Church and distributed in conjunction with Catholic Relief Services.
- After the 17 January earthquake in **Japan**, hundreds of members joined local relief efforts to assist the homeless and injured. The Kobe Ward meetinghouse and adjoining Japan Kobe Mission Home, for example, were used as shelters for members and non-members, and as makeshift distribution centers.
- Students from Utah's Snow College sent 45 tons of excess food from local Bishop's storehouses to **Croatia**.



## UPDATE

## COURT RULES FOR BYU IN HOUSING BAN



BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY has apparently reached an end to its off-campus housing woes. About two years ago, the American Civil Liberties Union of Utah, charging that Provo apartment owners discriminate according to gender, marital status, and religion, filed a lawsuit against twelve landlords. While not named in the suit, BYU soon joined the fray, contributing legal advice and funds to apartment owners (see "BYU Joins Landlords in Fight against ACLU," SUNSTONE, Dec. 1994).

The Federal District Court for Utah heard the case in January—a trial was not necessary since all parties agreed to virtually all the facts in the case. What they didn't agree on was the application of two opposing U.S. federal laws: Title IX, which applies to universities, and the Fair Housing Act, which regulates what private landlords can do. The *Deseret News* said BYU attorneys argued that Title IX takes precedence, giving the school power to contract with off-campus landlords to provide sex-segregated housing for single students. The ACLU, however, claimed that the Fair Housing Act alone controls what landlords can do. ACLU attorney Bruce Plenk acknowledged that BYU legally can segregate men and women in housing it owns and operates; it is when private landlords do the same in their BYU-approved

housing that discrimination occurs, he said. These two laws are clearly in conflict, said BYU general counsel Eugene Bramhall. "It's up to the court to find a way to harmonize the two."

The following month, Judge David Winder ruled in favor of BYU's housing policy on all counts, saying landlords of BYU-approved housing have the right to segregate students from non-students and segregate those students by sex and marital status. The ACLU is now appealing the decision before the 10th Circuit Court in Denver.

## BOOTH SAYS MORMONS NEED TO DEVELOP A CRITICAL TRADITION

WAYNE C. BOOTH, George M. Pullman Distinguished Service Professor of English emeritus at the University of Chicago, during the opening session of the Association of Mormon Letters 1995 Annual Conference in January, said that Mormonism will not have its great writers and playwrights until it develops a critical community that artists consider in producing their works. Shakespeare, he said, didn't produce in a vacuum, but wrote for a critical community that consisted of actors, other playwrights, and theatergoers who had standards he strove to meet or exceed.

The following day, BYU professors Neal Kramer, Gideon Burton, and Grant Boswell spoke on Booth's writings. Boswell said he agreed with Booth's assertion that Mormonism needs a critical literary tradition. "Our problem is that we have been writing passively, rather than cultivating it," he said.

Also at the conference, Catholic thinker Patricia Coleman gave a paper comparing the humor of Catholic writer David Lodge and Mormon writer Neal Chandler. She said both do a good job reminding us "how foolish we are, if not in our principles, certainly in our practices." Susan Howe, in her presidential address, defended authors' rights to publish on a broad spectrum of topics but was disturbed by some of the violent writings of a number of contemporary Mormon authors. "Violence is easy, not worthy of the best Mormon

## PEOPLE

## TRANSFERS

- **Maureen Ursebach Beecher, Carolyn Susan Kisslinger, and Larry Windland** have all accepted positions on the John Whitmer Historical Association Board.
- **Elder Henry B. Eyring**, former member of the Seventy, has been sustained as a member of the Council of the Twelve.
- **Elder James E. Faust**, member of the Council of the Twelve, has been sustained as the second counselor in the First Presidency.
- **Jake Garn**, former U.S. senator from Utah, is among ten people named to an advisory board that will oversee the Center for Science, Technology, and Congress.
- **William Gay** has retired after serving on the Polynesian Cultural Center board for thirty years.
- **President Gordon B. Hinkley**, former first counselor in the First Presidency, has been sustained as the President of the LDS church.
- **Richard P. Lindsay**, former member of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, has been named national education director for the

Religious Alliance against Pornography.

- **President Thomas S. Monson**, former second counselor in the First Presidency, has been sustained as the first counselor in the First Presidency.
- **L. Jackson Newell**, former dean of liberal education at the University of Utah, has been named the next president of Deep Springs College, an exclusive men's college in California.
- **Bruce L. Olsen**, managing director of the Church's Public Affairs Department, has been named the new chair of the National Interfaith Cable Coalition's membership board.
- **Kay Schwendiman**, a retired Army chaplain and colonel, will be the first Church member to head the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces.

## AWARDS

- **Lowell Bennion**, noted Mormon humanitarian, was honored in January by Salt Lake's Community Services Council. A renovated building that houses Utah's Food Bank and other service organiza-

minds," she said. We need to "transfer violence into other ways of resolving conflict." Howe encouraged Mormon writers to "use your language, use your imagination" to write "powerful stories" that teach us other ideals. During an evening social, AML award winners, who were announced at the conference, read from their works.

## GRITZ QUITS THE CHURCH

FORMER THIRD-PARTY U.S. presidential candidate James "Bo" Gritz and his family have asked that their names be removed from LDS church membership rolls. The former Green Beret said he decided to leave the Church after his stake president asked him, in a temple recommend interview, if he was going to file a 1993 income tax return. (In his presidential campaign, Gritz had been critical of U.S. tax law, frequently calling it "unconstitutional.") Gritz, who has been a Church member for ten years, told the *Deseret News* he doesn't want to be part of a church that "appears to be more controlled by the government than God. . . . We just don't want to be members of a corporate church that isn't led by Jesus Christ," he said.

Gritz, who said later that he paid his taxes, still has one question: "Where in the equation of salvation does the [Internal Revenue Service] fit?" Church spokesperson Don LeFevre told the *News* that members are obligated by the twelfth article of faith to obey the laws of the land. "A member who refuses to file a tax return, to pay required income taxes or to comply with a final judgment in a tax case is in direct conflict with the law and with the teachings of the church," he said. "If a member disapproves of tax laws, he may attempt to have them changed by legislation or constitutional amendment." Since his 1992 campaign, Gritz and his followers, according to the *News*, have purchased 280 acres of land near Kamiah, Idaho, where they hope to build a "Christian covenant community" named "Almost Heaven" (see "Gritz Denies Building Base in Idaho," *SUNSTONE*, Dec. 1994).

In a lengthy personal essay published in the November issue of his *Center for Action* newsletter, Gritz said he and his family had been ostracized by many friends and followers since leaving the Church. "Now that I have stirred up a storm by inquiring why the LDS corporate church is acting more like tax collectors than witnesses for the

Lord Jesus Christ, some of our fair-weather friends have abandoned ship," he writes. "Better now than when things really begin to buffet."

Some speculate that Gritz's break with the Church will end any shot he may have had in politics. In his 1992 presidential bid, Gritz received about 90,000 votes, a third of which came from Utahns.

## TWO RARE LDS PHOTOGRAPHS RECOVERED

THE LDS CHURCH has recovered two rare photographs that Church police believe were stolen from the Church historical department in the early 1980s, the Associated Press reported. One is an 1850 portrait of Brigham Young; the other is of the 1853 Salt Lake Temple groundbreaking. According to the AP, Church archivists discovered the photos were missing about four years ago, but assumed they had only been misplaced. But in July 1991, a New York dealer called the historical department to see if it would be interested in acquiring two photos. After hearing descriptions of the daguerreotypes (photographic images on chemically treated silver plates), the historical department told the dealer that they seemed to match those missing from Church archives. The AP reports that Church officials flew to New York to personally examine the daguerreotypes. Both were returned after the Church sued to regain possession.

## U. PRESS DROPS MORMON BOOKS

THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH PRESS announced in January that it had decided to drop its Mormon Studies series and will be placing its emphasis on more lucrative regional history and natural science titles. The Associated Press reported that publications in the Mormon Studies series that are selling well—like Jessie Embry's *Mormon Polygamous Families* and Martha Sonntag Bradley's *Kidnapped from that Land: The Government Raids on the Short Creek Polygamists*—will remain in the catalog. And those books in the series that are under contract will be printed. Mary Bradford's biography of Lowell Bennion, LDS theologian, U. sociologist, LDS Institute teacher, and Salt Lake humanitarian, which was under consideration, will not be published by the press.

tions was named after Lowell and his late wife, Merle.

- **Brigham Young University** was ranked tenth in the nation in its enrollment of National Merit Scholars in fall of 1994. BYU also placed sixth in the nation in the number of Merit Scholars sponsored and funded by the university (in contrast to those who have corporate or National Merit sponsorship).
- **Brigham Young University's** student public relations society recently received the "Outstanding Chapter" award from the Public Relations Student Society of America.
- **Larry EchoHawk**, a BYU law professor and former BYU football player, was given the Silver Anniversary Award in January by the National Collegiate Athletic Association. The award is presented to former college athletes who have had exemplary careers.
- **Gordon B. Hinckley**, then first counselor in the Church's First Presidency, was honored in February by the Utah region's National Conference of Christians and Jews for his leadership in promoting morality and culture in America.
- **Gifford Nielson**, former All-American BYU quarterback, was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in December 1994. Nielson is the first BYU player to receive this honor.

- **Elder Boyd K. Packer**, president of the Council of the Twelve, and **Beverly Campbell**, director of international affairs for the Church in Washington D.C., recently recipients of the BYU Management Society's annual Distinguished Public Service Award.
- **Elaine Sorenson**, associate dean of BYU's School of Nursing, was inducted into the Western Academy of Nurses in May. She is the second Utah nurse to receive this honor.
- **Steve Young**, BYU law school graduate and San Francisco 49er, was named the National Football League's Most Valuable Player for the 1994 season and the 1995 Superbowl.

## DEATHS

- **Hyrum Larsen**, former chair of the BYU microbiology department, died 18 January 1995 from congestive heart failure.
- **Rowena J. Miller**, former personal secretary to President J. Reuben Clark Jr., died of natural causes 7 January 1995. She was 86.
- **Edwin Rossiter**, former BYU professor of chemistry, died of cancer 5 February 1995. He was 41.
- **Maurice J. Taylor**, former physician to numerous LDS general authorities, died of natural causes 13 March 1995. He was 87.



## PAGEANT WINNERS ABOUND AT BYU

A RECENT front-page article in the *Salt Lake Tribune* noted that if the number of Miss America contestants on campus is any indication, some of America's most "attractive, accomplished women attend BYU." The article listed Brook Hammond (Miss Nevada), Miss Wyoming, Miss Colorado, Priscilla Packard (Miss Utah Valley), Jennifer Lee Kerns (Miss Uintah County), and Amy Osmond (national Junior Miss) as current or recently graduated BYU students. Pageant organizers and participants say they believe the culture's emphasis on education and talent development is what sometimes gives Mormons an edge. The Miss America pageant represents "what the LDS faith believes in—the well-rounded woman, someone who is service-oriented, someone who has integrity," said Brooke Anderson (Miss Utah), a University of Utah student. Not everyone at BYU thinks this is a coup. English professor Gail Houston told the *Tribune*, "It reminds me of the Victorian period when women were supposed to have accomplishments. They learned how to paint a little and they learned how to play the piano and they learned how to speak a little French. All of it was amateur. The whole reason for it was to make them marketable for marriage."

## MOST UTAH COUNTY RESIDENTS THINK BYU HAS ENOUGH ACADEMIC FREEDOM

A YEAR after the firings of two controversial professors, 71 percent of residents in Utah County (the county in which BYU is located) say they think BYU has "about the right amount" of academic freedom, according to a copyrighted *Deseret News* story and poll from January. Of the 401 residents polled, only 12 percent said they felt BYU should have more academic freedom; 3 percent said professors should have less freedom. The poll has an error rate of plus or minus 5 percent.

Some BYU faculty said they aren't surprised by the results of the poll. Douglas Tobler, a BYU professor of history, said he feels that the only controversy surrounding the firings of Cecilia Konchar Farr, former BYU assistant English professor, and David Knowlton, former BYU assistant anthropology professor, existed in the minds of the media ("BYU Fires Two Controversial Faculty Members, SUNSTONE, July 1993). "I think the newspapers made a bigger deal out of it than what it really was," Tobler told the *News*. "I think you'd find that what

happened affected very few people, and that for the most part, the faculty supports what the administration did." John Hughes, a BYU communications professor who is on a year's leave to be director of communications at the United Nations, agrees. "I have never felt muzzled while I've taught at BYU," he told the *News*. "I have worked for a lot of different institutions, and each has its own rules. I think the role of the individual is clear-cut—you work with the respect of the institution you are employed by. If you don't like their rules, then you work for someone else." Knowlton said the poll's results are pretty much what he would expect. "I don't think it is a burning community issue," he told the *News*. "I am sort of surprised that it is only 70 percent. The BYU faculty is a very small group when it is included with the entire county. I think even the 12 percent who think there should be more academic freedom is quite high."

## UTAH, CHURCH FIGHT SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

THE UTAH legislature has passed a bill that will, if ruled constitutional, prevent the marriages of same-sex couples performed outside Utah from being legally recognized in the state. As the end-of-session midnight deadline approached, Senate leaders fast-forwarded the document past other important bills and rammed it through with little time for debate or amendment. Opponents of the measure hoped its post-midnight (12:03 A.M.) passage would make it invalid. But since clocks in the chamber are not all in agreement, the judgment of midnight's passing falls on the Senate president and House speaker, both of whom voted for the bill. The LDS church has declared itself neutral in regards to the legislation. But last year, the First Presidency released a statement urging members to lobby "legislators, judges and other government officials" to prevent the legalization of same-sex marriages. The statement may have been a reaction to the possible sanctioning of gay and lesbian unions by the state of Hawaii, where the state's Supreme Court has sent a discrimination suit, filed in 1991 by three same-sex couples, back to its court of origination, saying that the state must provide a compelling interest why same-sex unions should not be legal. Local Hawaiian LDS church leaders, led by Regional Representative Don Hallstrom, requested permission to supply extra legal manpower, expert witnesses, and research results to aid Hawaii's attorney general in the fight against the case,

## BULLETIN BOARD

**BYU Football Star Chooses Sabbath over NFL.** Eli Herring, one of BYU's all-time best offensive tackles, despite being drafted by the Los Angeles Raiders, has decided to pass up playing in the National Football League so he can keep the Sabbath day holy. "When I was making my decision everyone brought up [San Francisco 49ers quarterback] Steve Young as being an LDS guy who has been a good influence for the Church through the fame he's received in the NFL. He has been a good example for the Church, but for me, [playing on Sunday] isn't an option," Herring told the *Deseret News*.

**Church Urges Members to House Foster Children.** In response to Utah Governor Mike Leavitt's plea that more care be provided for foster and other needy children, the LDS First Presidency has issued a statement urging all members who are "in a position to help" to do everything they can.

**Church Hires Public Relations Firm.** In February, the Church hired Edelman Public Relations Worldwide to work on interna-

tional relations. "Our objective is a long-term program that supports the Church's global mission to share the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ," said Bruce L. Olsen, managing director of Church Public Affairs.

**RLDS Church Considers Name Change.** The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints will debate changing its unofficial name to "Community of Christ" during its 1996 World Conference. The February issue of *Saints Herald*, an official RLDS church magazine, urged members to discuss and reflect upon the proposed change prior to the conference.

**LDS Church Organizes 2,000th Stake.** In December, the Church reached a major milestone when President Howard W. Hunter formed the Mexico City Mexico Contreras Stake, the Church's 2,000th stake. It is the 129th stake in Mexico, which now has more than 700,000 members. In its number of Latter-day Saints, Mexico is second only to the United States, which has 4.5 million members.



which will go to trial on 25 September. "We do not see this as a civil-rights issue," Elder Hallstrom was quoted as saying. "We see it as a protection of traditional marriage." Dan Foley, who represents the gay Hawaiian couples, opposed the Church's intervention and asked the court to "sanction the church for this frivolous motion." Later, a circuit judge did just that, refusing to allow the Church to enter the legal battle. Meanwhile, gay organizations have vowed not only to challenge the legality of the Utah bill, which has since been signed into law by Utah Governor Mike Leavitt, but also to petition the International Olympic Committee to disallow Utah's candidacy in the bid for the 2002 Winter Olympics.

## ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE FINDS NO EVIDENCE OF LDS SATANIC ABUSE

RESPONDING TO a memo written by Glenn L. Pace (then a member of the Church's Presiding Bishopric) and other allegations of satanic ritual child abuse among some Mormon leaders and members, Police Detective Mike King launched a Utah legislature-funded investigation in 1991 ("Leaked Bishop's Memo Spotlights LDS Ritual Satanic Sexual Abuse," *SUNSTONE*, Nov. 1991). This February, at the conclusion of the probe, King announced that no evidence had been found to justify prosecution for the alleged crimes. He told Utah-based television station KUTV that he screened 225 cases and gave close scrutiny to 125. In the process, he says, he talked to hundreds of people who alleged they were raped, tortured, "forced to perform horrible acts," and brainwashed. Others told King they saw babies murdered or were forced to participate in ritual murders. "I really feel for these people and I would like to help them, but we just couldn't find the evidence," King told KUTV. King also called allegations involving Church leaders "absurd."

Bishop Pace's memo, written to the Strengthening Church Members Committee, summarizes over fifty interviews he conducted with men, women, and children who said they were abused in Utah,



Elder Pace's memo on child abuse helped spark a 1991 investigation.

California, Mexico, and other locations. Some victims told Bishop Pace that they were "baptized in blood" to cancel their Mormon baptism. The abusers reportedly included parents, Church leaders (including general authorities), temple workers, and members of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Some victims reported that only when they went through the temple and participated in its rituals did they begin to have "flashbacks" of the similar satanic rituals they had experienced but had blocked out for years.

## BYU FEMINISTS PROTEST JUSTICE THOMAS'S VISIT

MUCH TO organizers' dismay, the J. Reuben Clark Law School's annual moot court competition usually doesn't receive a whole lot of media attention. This year they probably wish it hadn't received any.

The problems began in February when BYU announced that U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas would be heading the competition's five-judge panel. Members of the BYU feminist organization VOICE were frustrated with the university's speaker and guest policies and wanted to know why Thomas, "whose respect for and treatment of women were seriously called into question" during his confirmation hearings, was an honored guest of BYU when the administration has denied petitions to bring "controversial" feminists to campus.

VOICE requested a protest permit only to have it rejected. Administrators said that not only was the request filed two hours late, but they felt that pursuing the matter further would be "a deliberate, irresponsible attempt to embarrass a sitting member of the U.S. Supreme Court and the university." So instead of rallying at the law school, VOICE moved its demonstration to the sidewalk in front of BYU's main entrance sign. Some twenty-five women and two men held banners reading, "VOICE welcomes Clarence Thomas. Now can we invite Anita Hill?" and "Where was the red carpet for Laurel Thatcher Ulrich?" (University administrators would not allow Ulrich, a Mormon Pulitzer Prize-winning Harvard historian, to speak at the BYU Women's Conference in 1993.) Perry Smith, student leader of the "Ditto Head" [Rush Limbaugh] conservative club, organized a counter-protest. "These women need to get a clue," he told the *Deseret News*. "If you come to this campus, you are going to hear the views of people who support LDS doctrine. If they want liberal speakers, they can go to Berkeley."

**Alan Osmond Diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis.** Alan Osmond, the oldest member of the Osmond singing group, says he has progressive multiple sclerosis—"the kind of MS that comes on very slowly and keeps getting gradually worse." He told *Entertainment Tonight* that the first indication he had the degenerative nerve disease came while he was playing the trumpet and could not finger it as quickly as usual.

**BYU Graduate Creates Popular Violent Game.** Sandy Peterson, a BYU graduate and father of five, is the co-creator of one of the most popular, as well as violent, video games on the market. In DOOM, characters fire shotguns and rocket launchers and use fists or chain saws to turn the enemy into red pulp. DOOM's graphic, bloody mayhem is partly responsible for a new ratings system designed in response to last year's congressional video game violence hearings. Peterson told the *Salt Lake Tribune* that there is a "pornography of violence," but said he doesn't think DOOM falls into that category.

**Utahns Protest Scripture-Trashing Rock Band.** Scores of compact disks by the rock group Nine Inch Nails were returned to Utah

record stores after a band touring with them, Marilyn Manson, tore up a Book of Mormon during a November concert. One record store owner, Terry Xanthos, told BYU's *Daily Universe* that within two weeks of the concert more than thirty CDs had been returned. David Whitehead, owner of Graywhale CD Exchange, said posters, hats, T-shirts, and at least ten CDs, had been returned to his store.

**Old Salt Lake Mission Home Demolished.** To make room for a parking lot, the historic Lafayette School has been reduced to rubble. The old school, which sat on the northwest corner of State and North Temple, had been built in the 1920s and used as a missionary home from 1971 to 1978.

**Alleged Scripture Thief Nabbed.** A Canadian fugitive was recently arrested in connection with a wave of scripture thefts in Salt Lake. According to the *Salt Lake Tribune*, the 63-year-old male suspect would allegedly go to local Deseret Book stores and steal enough books to fill customer orders for his "discounted scriptures." Investigators said about seventy books—worth about \$90 each—were recovered.



BYU feminist club VOICE protests Supreme Court Justice Thomas's visit.

The protest, which some felt was helpful in highlighting political bias on campus, also had another outcome: the president of BYUSA, the university's student service association, revoked VOICE's power to hold public events—unless they are approved and co-sponsored by BYUSA. The sanctions will last until the beginning of the 1996 winter semester.

### BYU WORKS TO INCREASE CAMPUS DIVERSITY

ERLEND PETERSON, BYU dean of admissions, recently told *BYU's Daily Universe* that the university is making efforts to ensure its population better represents the membership of the Church. For example, "All students go through the [same] admissions process," he said. "However, before a minority student is denied admission, further consideration is made to evaluate whether or not an exception should be made . . . based on a total portfolio examination." Minority students comprise 6.5 percent of BYU's current student body.

Another area of focus is gender imbalance: last fall, women comprised only 18 percent of BYU's full-time faculty. One of the many departments lacking women is Religious Education; out of the fifty-seven full-time faculty members, three are women. Darlene Kelly, equal opportunity manager at BYU, told the *Universe* that twenty-four part-time faculty members, all women, were recently hired "to provide more female role models." (Shortly after the announcement, a minor brouhaha ensued on the *Universe's* editorial pages, with some students defending the hirings and others saying women in the work force set a poor example.)

The recent hirings and push for greater ethnic diversity could bode well for BYU's 1996 accreditation—the generally positive 1986 accreditation report criticized BYU for its "lack of diversity" and encouraged the university to "move forward positively to diversify, [which] will create issues and conflicts largely foreign to the institution" ("BYU Receives High Marks in Reaccreditation," *SUNSTONE*, Jan. 1987).

### MORMONS AND OTHERS CONTINUE ANTI-PORN FIGHT IN NEVADA

RESIDENTS FROM predominantly Mormon communities in Mesquite and Bunkerville, Nev., and St. George, Ut., are still dedicated to a round-the-clock protest of the Pure Pleasure Book & Video pornography store ("Church Members Join in Anti-Pornography Crusade," *SUNSTONE*, Dec. 1994). "We won't be going anywhere

until they quit trying to peddle their filth in our communities," one protester told the Associated Press. Over the two-and-one-half years since Pure Pleasure opened, an estimated 8,000 people have put in time waving signs or marching around the small Mesquite store. They're organized in three-hour shifts with on-site facilities—a trailer, electricity, running water, a telephone, and a misting system for hot summer days. They even hold Sunday church services in the parking lot. It's a peaceful protest, generally. (Organizers say, however, that things did get a little rough when one porn store employee taunted them by tacking Elder Mark E. Peterson's 1960s handout on masturbation to the store's door.) Protest organizers from HOME (Help Our Moral Environment) say their most successful tactic so far has been logging the license plate number, personal description, and length of visit of each Pure Pleasure patron. (Protesters say they call the police when something seems out of line—like last year when several Utah state employees decided to visit the store in a state vehicle on state time.) HOME statistics indicate that 77 percent of the store's visitors have Utah license plates.

HOME's work has had measurable results. Sam Cianciola of Pure Pleasure told the AP that his business has fallen by half in the last year, resulting in a \$5,000-a-day loss. "They've tried everything including marching around the building like Joshua and Jericho to get us out—but don't hold your breath," Cianciola told the *Salt Lake Tribune*. "We're not going anywhere." In fact, Cianciola has plans to expand. He wants to bring nude dancers to Pure Pleasure, build a house of prostitution on the Nevada-Utah state line, and start a direct-mail service for sexually explicit materials called Long Distance Sales (LDS). "I'm sure that will get their attention," he told the AP with a smile.

### BYU MICROBIOLOGIST RECOVERS DNA FROM DINOSAUR BONE

BYU MICROBIOLOGIST Scott Woodward resisted the temptation to dismiss *Jurassic Park* as pure fantasy. He was already working on extracting DNA from dinosaur bones when the movie—based on a fictitious experiment in which Jurassic-era DNA was used to breed live dinosaurs—was released a couple of years ago. And his persistence paid off: last fall, Woodward and student research assistant Nathan Weyand coaxed DNA samples from two bone fragments that had been found by geologist Mark Bunnell in a Carbon County coal mine near Schofield, Ut. Woodward and Weyand were stunned when their tests yielded intact DNA sequences. "It's like nothing we've ever seen before," Woodward told the university's alumni publication, *Brigham Young Magazine*. "This is something that hasn't



BYU researcher Scott Woodward coaxes DNA from dinosaur bones.

been seen for eighty million years. Of all the gene sequences that have been studied . . . this is unique." While it is too early to draw any conclusions from his work, Woodward does know this much: there probably will never be any *Jurassic Park*-ish dinosaurs from his DNA. "To think we could take DNA from any organism, living or dead, and put it all back in the correct order and then turn it on, have it work right, is far beyond our capability right now," he said.



## AWARDS

## THE ASSOCIATION FOR MORMON LETTERS

Excerpts from the 1994 awards, given at the annual AML meeting, 14 January 1995.

## An Award in the Novel

**ANNE PERRY***The Sins of the Wolf*

New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1994

Anne Perry's Victorian mystery calls out for a fireplace, a long winter's night, and a reader with the pleasure of time. This is a novel about family values, albeit with an unsettling twist. Closing the pages of *The Sins of the Wolf*, a reader can only find herself on the way to the bookstore and more Anne Perry.

## An Award in the Short Story

**WAYNE JORGENSEN***"Who Tarzan, Who Jane"**High Plains Literary Review*

9:1 (spring 1994)

Jorgensen creates a narrator's voice that races, halts, sputters, and tumbles on, mimicking the workings of the central character's consciousness as he wrestles with self-doubt and sexual desire. Mormon fiction involving sex—what little there is of it—typically focuses on illicit desire and congress; Jorgensen celebrates "immortal beauty's bodily moment" within a conventional Mormon marriage.

## An Award in the Poem

**PAMELA PORTER HAMBLIN***"Magi"**Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*

26:4 (winter 1993)

Pamela Hamblin combines the language of everyday speech with figures so commonplace that they seem to rise of their own accord from the subject. But out of the familiar story of Bethlehem and Calvary springs, for each of us, the death of an old and sterile way of life and the birth of a new way that demands a contrition that "will break our hearts."

## An Award in the Essay

**RICHARD D. POLL***"A Liahona Latter-day Saint"*

SUNSTONE 17:2 (Sept. 1994)

In early 1994, the distinguished career of Richard D. Poll came full circle. His Liahona/Iron-rod dichotomy, borrowed from the Book of Mormon, had entered the lexicon of Mormon thought almost thirty years earlier. In a time when some are called sinners for a word; when the terms "alternative" and "dissident" are being redefined as sinister; when some seek apostasy, while others have apostasy thrust upon them, Richard Poll's calm, reasoned, compassionate voice rings with a clarity that will live on in our hearts and minds.

## An Award in the Drama

**ERIC SAMUELSEN***Accommodations: A Play in Three Acts*

SUNSTONE 17:1 (June 1994)

In a place where love and brutality must co-exist, what compromises are acceptable, even essential, and at what point do they become manipulations or betrayals of ourselves or others? *Accommodations* unflinchingly confronts these dilemmas, "warning" us of dangers, hinting at possibilities, and, wisely, despite a hopeful ending, guaranteeing no solutions.

## An Award in Children's and

*Young Adult Literature***DEAN HUGHES***The Trophy*

New York: Knopf, 1994

Books for young readers fall mostly into one of two categories: those which adults love and think children should love; and those which children actually love. *The Trophy* is a story that belongs in a special category of books that charm both children and adults.

## An Award in Biography

**WILLIAM G. HARTLEY***My Best for the Kingdom:**History and Autobiography of**John Lowe Butler, a Mormon Frontiersman*

Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1993

Hartley's recent biography of Mormon convert John Lowe Butler (1808–1860) has all the trappings of historical treatise. But Hartley bodies forth one of Mormonism's ordinary men living an extraordinary life. Hartley has made him our neighbor, friend, brother.

## An Award in Criticism

**GIDEON O. BURTON***"Towards a Mormon Criticism: Should We Ask 'Is This Mormon Literature?'"**The Association for Mormon Letters Annual*, 1994

Passion for the question of whether there is a Mormon literature has been easy to engender. Gideon Burton makes a major, restorative contribution to the discussion of the dilemma articulated by Richard Cracroft and Bruce Jorgensen. By shifting the discussion of LDS criticism from its focus on the content of literature to the way in which literature is conceived and received, he makes us stop, take stock, and begin again. For Burton, Restoration—the act of Restoration—is the heart of Mormon literature and the eye of Mormon criticism.

## Honorary Life Memberships

**WAYNE C. BOOTH**

As a teacher, scholar, and academic leader, Wayne C. Booth has mixed reasoned argument and irony with a keen sense of the need for faith and the moral life. Upon receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, Wayne went first to Haverford College and then to Earlham College, where he began his first scholarly book, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Once at the University of Chicago, he was named dean of the college and served with great distinction during the student upheavals of the late 1960s. During those years, he edited two collections of essays and was becoming recognized as the foremost rhetorical critic in the U.S. The resulting book, *Critical Understanding*, presents a powerful argument for both the ethics and rigor of pluralism as a critical tool. Booth has confirmed what we Mormons have known all along, that changed lives result "from a close reading of beloved . . . and sacred books."

**MARY LYTHGOE BRADFORD**

Much has happened in the Mormon literary world because of Mary Lythgoe Bradford's work: the reconnection of Virginia Sorensen to her Mormon roots; Mary's biography of Lowell Bennion; the recovery of *Dialogue* during her editorship (1978–83) from financial instability. Mary created another literary link for us in 1981 through *Mormon Women Speak*, the first collection of personal essays by Mormon women. Her own collection of personal essays, *Leaving Home*, was published in 1987. It is her indomitable enthusiasm for Mormon letters, her insightful intellect, her genuine warmth, and her intuitive quest for a better world for all of us that help tie us to her and to each other.

**WILLIAM A. (BERT) WILSON**

Bert is both the foremost American scholar of Finnish folklore and the foremost scholar of Mormon folklore. A mission to Finland led him to Ph.D. work at Indiana on Finnish folklore and to the publication in 1976 of *Folklore and Nationalism in Modern Finland*. Bert's first published essay, in 1969, was based on "Three Nephite" legends collected from Mormon faculty and students at Indiana; he has now published over thirty essays that describe and interpret Mormon culture for both Mormons and non-Mormons and nearly as many essays that illustrate and champion the crucial role folklore plays in humanizing people. Bert's voice is always compassionate, challenging, humane, and grounded in fierce integrity.



## SUNSTONE CALENDAR

## MORMON ORGANIZATIONS MEET

**AFFIRMATION** will hold its annual national conference in Seattle on **4-6 August 1995**. Keynote speaker will be Mel White, author of *Stranger at the Gate*. Contact David Johnson (206/820-5729), Karen Swannack (206/874-8362; e-mail canoeplay@aol.com), or Rob Killian (716/232-3149; e-mail robkillian@aol.com).

**THE ASSOCIATION FOR MORMON LETTERS** will sponsor a session at the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association's 1995 meeting in Spokane, Wa., this fall. Submit proposals or manuscripts to Neal Kramer, General Education and Honors, Brigham Young University, 350-B Maeser Building, Provo, Ut. 84602.

**BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY** will hold its annual Education Week **21-25 August 1995**. Contact the Education Week office at 801/378-2987.

**FAWN BRODIE'S NO MAN KNOWS MY HISTORY: A 50-YEAR PERSPECTIVE** will take place on **9 August 1995** in the Behavioral Science Auditorium at the University of Utah. Admission free. Contact William Mulder (801/328-2768).

**THE SOCIETY FOR UTOPIAN STUDIES** will hold its twentieth meeting in Toronto, **19-22 October 1995**. Send abstracts to Merritt Abrash, Box 237 RD 1, Stephentown, N.Y. 12168 (518/733-5586).

**WORKSHOP ON CHURCH MUSIC** will be held at BYU on **8-11 August 1995**. Contact BYU Conferences and Workshops, 352 Harman Bldg., Provo, Ut. 84602-1503 (801/378-7692).

## SUNSTONE CONFERENCES

**THE 1995 SALT LAKE SUNSTONE SYMPOSIUM** will be held **9-12 August** at the Salt Lake Hilton Hotel. For more information, contact the Sunstone Foundation, 331 Rio Grande Street, Suite 206, Salt Lake City, Ut. 84101 (801/355-5926; fax 801/355-4043).

NORTHWEST SUNSTONE SYMPOSIUM  
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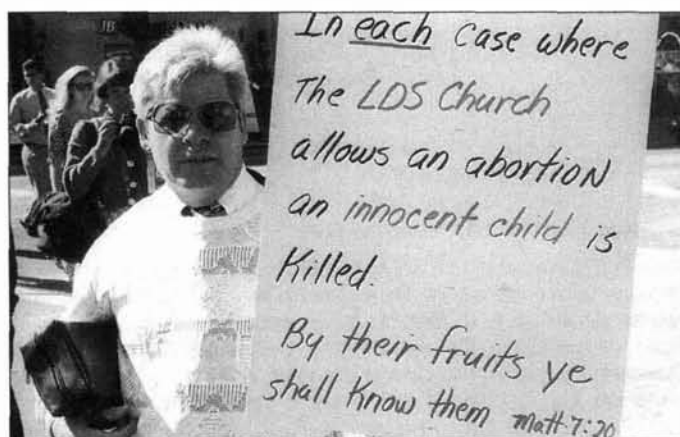
Contact Molly Bennion, 1150 22nd Ave. E,  
Seattle, Wa. 98112 (206/325-6868).

CHICAGO SUNSTONE SYMPOSIUM  
CALL FOR PAPERS

20-21 October 1995

Contact Ann Stone, 2705 Thayer, Evanston, Il. 60201  
(708/475-2583) or Susan Paxman Hatch (708/482-3518).

## ALL-SEEING EYE



The usual protesters—upset with the Church's "liberal" position on abortion—parade outside Temple Square during general conference.



Chips off the ol' Sunstone: The foundation's editors and publishers meet for the 1994 Salt Lake Symposium. Daniel Rector, 1986-91; Peggy Fletcher Stack, 1978-86; Elbert Peck, 1986-present; Allen Roberts, 1978-80; Scott Kenney 1975-1978 (from left to right).



Bill Martin, a non-Mormon and a professor of philosophy at DePaul University of Chicago, taught a class on "The Mormons: History, Philosophy, Community" last winter. Guest lecturers included BYU philosophy professor James Faulconer, University of Chicago literary critic Wayne Booth, and Donny Osmond (above with the class), who was in town performing Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.

SUNSPOTS



NOT THE EXPOSURE WE HAD IN MIND

BYU FANS like nothing better than a little national publicity for their (real or adopted) alma mater. San Francisco 49ers quarterback Steve Young's recent Superbowl victory gave them reason to cheer; drive around Salt Lake or Utah Valley, and chances are that even now, ten years after the fact, you'll see many proudly displayed "BYU—1984 NCAA Champions" bumper stickers. But Cougar fans may not spread the word so zealously about a four-page *Sports Illustrated* article featuring BYU basketball coach Roger Reid and his two sons, who are starters. It's not the content of the laudatory article; fans were ecstatic, in fact, about its appearance—until they found out it would end up sandwiched between photos of bikini-clad supermodels in the yearly *SI* swimsuit issue. An official at BYU, where possession of the issue in BYU housing appears to violate the Honor Code, recommended that students clip out the article and toss the remainder of the magazine. No recommendation was made, however, for the janitors responsible for emptying all those trash cans.

THE PLAN (10) OF SALVATION



An alien from Plan 10 from Outer Space.

WHAT DO space aliens, polygamists, the Deseret alphabet, and lyrics by W. W. Phelps all have in common? They're part of *Plan 10 from Outer Space*, Salt-Laker Trent Harris's 1995 Sundance Film Festival entry. From the opening credits, subtitled in the Deseret alphabet, to the final scene, in which Nehor, the female space alien (an erstwhile plural wife of Brigham Young), proclaims the advent of a matriarchal reign over Salt Lake, the film is saturated with Mormon insider humor. Such references include a flannel board explanation of Mormon history; horny, balding male RMs with panty fetishes;

a soundtrack that prominently features "If You Could Hie To Kolob"; flashbacks including Porter Rockwell in his role as Danite avenger; and the Masonic distress symbol, used to signal alien ships. Non-Mormons may find themselves entertained by the film, but the ideal audience would be made up of outside-insiders or inside-outsiders. When the film's protagonist, a twenty-something female jack-Mormon seeking to uncover the mystery of the ancient "Plaque of Kolob," hypothesizes: "Maybe Brigham Young was an alien—it sure would explain a lot about Salt Lake City," we feel certain that Harris's quirky flick is destined for yearly runs at Salt Lake's Tower Theater and a permanent place among Utah cult classics.

OXYMORMONS



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## AN OLIVE LEAF

“... plucked from the Tree of Paradise, the Lord’s message of peace to us.”  
(See History of the Church 1:316 and D&C 88.)

## “THE LONELINESS OF LEADERSHIP”

By Gordon B. Hinckley

In his 2 April 1995 morning general conference address, new Church President Gordon B. Hinckley recalled his 4 November 1969 Brigham Young University devotional talk, “The Loneliness of Leadership” and that now he realizes the “full import of that loneliness.” Here are excerpts from that address.

I SUPPOSE MANY OF YOU WATCHED President Nixon last night as I did. . . . As I looked at him I thought of the terrible loneliness of leadership.

True he . . . has . . . any number of men with whom he can consult; but when all the chips are down, he has to face the world alone, as it were. His advisers do not face the cannon fire of public opinion. . . .

[W]hile watching him, there came to my mind some great words attributed to Queen Victoria: “Uneasy rests the head that wears the crown.”

. . . There is a great loneliness in leadership, but . . . we have to live with ourselves. A man has to live with his conscience. A Man has to live up to his inner feelings. . . .

There is a loneliness in all aspects of leadership. . . . [W]e feel it somewhat in this University. BYU is being discussed across the nation today because of some of our practices and some of our policies and some of our procedures, but I would like to offer the thought that no institution and no man ever lived at peace with itself or with himself in a spirit of compromise. . . .

It was ever thus. The price of leadership is loneliness. The price of adherence to conscience is loneliness. I think it is inescapable. The Savior of the world was a man who walked in loneliness. I do not know of any statement more underlined with the pathos of loneliness than his statement: “. . . The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” (Matt. 8:20.) . . .

Joseph Smith likewise was a figure of loneliness. I have a great love for the boy who came out of the woods, who after that experience could never be the same again, who was betrayed and persecuted and looked down upon. Can you sense the pathos in these words of the Prophet? “For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it; at least I knew that by so doing I would of-



Gordon B. Hinckley

fend God and come under condemnation.” (Joseph Smith—History 2:25.)

. . . This has been the history of the Church. . . . It came as a result of the position of leadership which was imposed upon us by the God of heaven. . . . And when the declaration was made concerning the only true and living Church upon the face of the earth, we were immediately put in a position of loneliness, the loneliness of leadership from which we cannot shrink nor run away and which we must face up to with boldness and courage and ability. . . .

I go back to the words of Paul: “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.” (2 Cor. 4:8–9.) . . .

You will feel the loneliness of your faith.

It is not easy, for instance, to be virtuous when all about you there are those who scoff at virtue.

It is not easy to be honest when all about you there are those who are interest in only making “a fast buck.” . . .

It is not easy to be industrious when all about you there are those who do not believe in the value of work.

It is not easy to be a man of integrity when all about you there are those who will forsake principle for expediency.

. . . [T]here is loneliness—but a man of your kind has to live with his conscience. A man has to live with his principles. A man has to live with his convictions. A man has to live with his testimony. Unless he does so, he is miserable—dreadfully miserable. And while there may be thorns, while there may be disappointment, while there may be trouble and travail, heartache and heartbreak, and desperate loneliness, there will be peace and comfort and strength.

I like these great words of the Lord . . . [:] “I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up.” (D&C 84:88.)

. . . God bless you to walk fearlessly even though you walk in loneliness, and to know in your hearts that peace which comes of squaring one’s life with principle, that “peace which passeth all understanding” . . . .





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