

But these are reactions. How did I feel? Good. I feel that I have supported this cause a long time — I shared Adolphus (Bud) Edwards's feeling of utter rejection after his 1970 attempt to get the ordination of women on the floor of the conference was literally yelled down. I am well aware of the limitations of a man's contribution to women's understanding (or understanding women), but felt at least a supportive role. And I felt vindicated. Women have a major and unique contribution to make. Anything that makes it easier for them to make it — and to live peacefully with themselves while they do — is worth our support and dedication.

But I have some serious concerns. I do not want unqualified or unfit women in important priesthood offices any more than I want unqualified or unfit men there. There is, at the moment, no tradition for women in the priesthood. That means nothing and a lot. Just as there was no tradition of women in politics — and thus women have had to make the long climb of experience and expertise — I hope that women, and those who ordain them, will recognize the need for periods of education and experience. This is not an excuse for delay nor even for undue caution — only an awareness of potential problems.

I am concerned as well with the overly structured nature of the priesthood and the tendency toward monarchism in our thinking. It is my hope that authority-minded women (often long starved for recognition) will not increase that difficulty rather than soften it.

Like so many things that we must deal with, it is really too early to tell what the significance of this change will be. I suspect that this instruction will produce far less change than some would want and others would fear. My feeling is that institutions — even those with prophetic leadership and courageous management — do not change as quickly as we sometimes expect. This is a major change — as is the instruction dealing with priesthood and with the temple — and will have long-term effects. I believe that that effect will be good and that the Church will grow in its own significance because of this instruction. Just how, and when, and to what extent is as yet very much to be decided by future direction and the Church's dedication and willingness to work with these new insights.

## Stranger in a Strange Land: A Personal Response to the 1984 Document

*L. Madelon Brunson*

Every RLDS Conference since 1970 has entertained legislation or discussion respecting ordination of women or expansion of their role. A review of the conferences from 1970 forward will be helpful background in understanding the persistency of this issue.

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Delegates of the 1970 conference moved to adopt a resolution which stated that women constituted a majority of the church membership but had limited opportunity to act as representatives. The legislation recommended that female participation on committees and commissions be more in keeping with their proportion of membership. When the item reached the floor, individuals in the Australian delegation presented a substitute motion which called the conference to affirm the acceptance of the leadership of women. It advocated an end to discrimination on the basis of gender and asked the presidency to clarify the church's stand on the ordination of women. One delegate objected to consideration. The chair ruled against objection, but the conference voted to table the entire matter.<sup>1</sup>

Looking toward the 1972 World Conference, the Portland, Oregon, Metropolitan branch passed a resolution on expanded female participation in church life. The preamble cited scriptures on equality and the church's confirmation of the principle. It called the church to reaffirm its belief. The last paragraph specified: "Resolved, That all those in administrative positions within the church be encouraged to appoint, hire and nominate women for positions not scripturally requiring priesthood so that women, who constitute over half of the church membership, may be more adequately and equally represented in the administrative decision-making of the church."<sup>2</sup> This resolution resembled the 1970 attempt, which had lost when eclipsed by the more radical substitute regarding ordination of women. During a 1972 World Conference business session, discussion of this "Opportunities for Women" resolution called attention to the fact that the U.S. Senate had, only the month before, overwhelmingly passed the Equal Rights Amendment. A motion to refer to the First Presidency and the Council of Twelve failed when a delegate pointed out that referral would leave the issue in an all-male domain. An amendment requesting the presidency to bring a progress report to the 1974 Conference was also unsuccessful. The body voted down a substitute asking for a study of positions which would not infringe on priesthood responsibilities. The original motion passed.<sup>3</sup>

The 1974 World Conference legislative body received the presidency's report suggesting implementation of the "Opportunities for Women" resolution. "This would include (a) employment of more women in paid staff positions; (b) appointment of more women to advisory commissions, committees, and boards; (c) moral and ethical leadership in the quest for full equality of women." They concluded with a pledge to continue searching for ways to move affirmatively toward equal participation.<sup>4</sup>

Pre-1976 Conference distribution of upcoming business included a resolution of the First Presidency regarding the ordination of women. Some unrest over this anticipated legislation resulted in counter proposals, and the con-

<sup>1</sup> *World Conference Bulletin*, 12 April 1970, pp. 329-30.

<sup>2</sup> *World Conference Bulletin*, 9 April 1972, p. 170.

<sup>3</sup> "World Conference Transcript: 1972," pp. 355-62, RLDS Library-Archives.

<sup>4</sup> "Report of the First Presidency," *World Conference Bulletin*, 1 April 1974, p. 208.

ference faced legislation hostile to the concept. The presidency's intention was to rescind General Conference Resolution (GCR) 564 as "no longer responsive to the needs of the Church." GCR 564 had been in the *Book of Rules and Resolutions* since 1905. It originated when Will S. Pender, a seventy assigned to the Seattle and British Columbia District, appealed to the Zion's Religio Literary Society on behalf of his wife, Fannie. He explained that she was in charge of the home class Religio work in Idaho and traveled at her own expense for the organization. Railroad companies offered reduced fares for ordained ministers traveling on church business, and he asked the Religio to request the General Conference to "set apart all such laborers, (Male or female) appointed by the Religio for that class of work by laying on of hands."<sup>5</sup> On 8 April 1905, the Religio Society presented this communication to the conference without recommendation. The 1905 assembly promptly referred the issue to a joint council of the First Presidency and the Twelve with instructions to report their considerations before adjournment of the current conference body. In summary, the 1905 enactment stated that since no rules or provisions by revelation existed on the ordination of women, and since the request was based on economic measures, the committee could not see its way clear to approve the setting apart or ordination.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1976 request for rescission of this old resolution, the presidency noted that several women's names had been submitted for ordination and that the 1905 decision precluded the processing of these calls. While another clause confessed that there was "no ultimate theological reason why women . . . could not hold priesthood," the final enactment paragraph stated that "consideration of the ordination of women be deferred until it appears in the judgment of the First Presidency that the church, by common consent, is ready to accept such ministry."<sup>7</sup> The 1976 World Conference voted to rescind GCR 564.

The 1978 Conference heard legislation which claimed that an organizational approach in effect for several years at the congregational level, and as set forth by the *Congregational Leaders Handbook*, 1978, tended to blur the traditional role of priesthood and unordained members. This was ruled out of order and therefore not discussed. However, other business entitled "Utilization of Unordained Men" was considered by the legislative body. The resolution urged the conference to recommend that the presidency study ways to more "effectively utilize the talents and abilities of unordained men."<sup>8</sup> A motion to amend by changing the word "men" to "persons" failed and the original resolution passed.

Legislation at the 1980 Conference requested endorsing the idea that women should never hold priesthood office in the RLDS church. Objection to consideration was sustained. Two other measures, at the same conference, suggested that the New Zealand National Church and Adelaide District of Aus-

<sup>5</sup> "Minutes of General Conference: 1905," *Supplement to Saints' Herald*, 6 April 1905, p. 755.

<sup>6</sup> "Minutes of General Conference," *Supplement to Saints' Herald*, 18 April 1905, p. 804.

<sup>7</sup> *World Conference Bulletin*, 28 March 1976, p. 181.

<sup>8</sup> *World Conference Bulletin*, 6 April 1978, p. 256.

tralia were ready to ordain women. The rationale was that various stages of cultural development existed throughout the church and that national churches should be free to determine the ordination issue for themselves in consultation with the First Presidency. This was ruled out of order since the chair interpreted it as conflicting with the 1976 Conference action, and since priesthood authority extended beyond national boundaries. Another enactment enjoined the conference to work toward the end of injustice and any social conditions which limit human freedom. Objection to consideration failed and the resolution passed. A motion calling for an annual progress report regarding the nondiscrimination in employment of women in the church failed.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, the 1982 Conference entertained two resolutions pertaining to the ordination of women. One stated that as there was no scriptural basis for ordaining women, the conference should wait for prophetic guidance. The other contended that there was no scriptural basis for limiting God in the matter and resolved that the church should affirm that there be no "barriers to ordination based on race, ethnic or national origin, or gender."<sup>10</sup> The chair called these two items to the floor with a report of the First Presidency reviewing the history of the issue as handled by past Conferences. The narration also included the "Recommendations on the Role of Women" as endorsed in 1974. After the recounting of this brief history, the statement requested that the two items be laid on the table.<sup>11</sup> However, rather than table the legislation, the delegates chose a motion of referral. This motion recommended that a task force, under the guidance of the First Presidency, make a survey to determine the attitude of members throughout the World Church and report back to the 1984 Conference.<sup>12</sup>

The task force reported the survey results in the 15 February 1984 *Saints Herald* as well as the *World Conference Bulletin*, 1 April 1984, pp. 244–58; 49 percent of the respondents opposed women being eligible for priesthood call, while approximately one-third approved.

Nearly 2,800 delegates attended the first day's business session on Tuesday, 3 April 1984, with the task force's information in hand. They had heard the document, now Section 156, only an hour earlier. Legislative consideration of the message was scheduled for Thursday. About 40 percent of the 1984 Conference body was female. As a member of the legislative group, I heard the document with a complex mixture of emotions and thoughts. A general feeling of depression settled in as I faced the dilemma of deciding how to vote on the pronouncement.

I spent Wednesday evening alone examining my response and listing what I perceived as my responsibilities to God, the church, and myself. When I entered the conference chamber the next day, I knew I could *not* vote no and align myself with those who believe that women are somehow inferior. Abstention

<sup>9</sup> *World Conference Bulletin*, 6–12 April 1980, pp. 236, 239, 274, 294, 307, 309.

<sup>10</sup> *World Conference Bulletin*, 28 March and 31 March 1982, pp. 268, 331.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335–337.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 355; "1982 World Conference Transcript," pp. 234–242, RLDS Archives.

tion seemed the only alternative to supporting the act of bringing women into participation in a hierarchical system. As Patriarch Duane Couey prayed prior to consideration of the document, quiet words entered my mind to go forward in trust. I voted yes on behalf of the women who believe this is an answer to the discrimination problem.

What were the reasons for my feelings of depression? I certainly believe women are capable and competent and should be able to choose ordination. Was I depressed because the guidelines were not included, though preferably separate from the document? Somewhat. Was I depressed because I might not be called; or, that I might be tempted to conform in order to be called? Perhaps. Because of the divisions which will undoubtedly occur among many? Probably. Because the structure seemed destined to remain the same? Certainly. Because of the pain which will ensue with the execution of the process? Assuredly. My depression was accentuated as I listened to others and felt utterly alone in my response. But perhaps the ultimate cause for my depression was being compelled to face the reality that unless I was willing to accommodate and accept the system, I would never perform the ordinances. This is a loss, and I grieve.

Were there some aspects of this change which I could celebrate? Wallace B. Smith was certainly bold in bringing such a controversial proclamation. Many women with whom I have talked have a feeling of relief or release, a general feeling of peace that somehow the institution at last affirms their equality and worth as persons. A few concerned men feel a lessening of the pressure caused from the knowledge that they participate in a discriminating system. I am glad for them, but I do not celebrate this. Relaxation may postpone necessary examination of a structure which still discriminates. The excluded ones have not been the system's sole victims. Eliminating the hierarchical order, the paternalism (maternalism?), which curbs growth and separates us is, to me, imperative. We deserve a time for relaxation and renewal if the resting time motivates us with increased energy toward justice and equity.

I personally feel a sense of urgency to proceed with explorations into what it means to be a church. While I respect President Smith's courage, I yearn for a maturity among our people and our leadership that will allow us to deal with issues openly and honestly. A document is considered by the legislative body under an aura which is absent in resolution deliberations. Are we only a cult with bureaucratic trappings?

The problems of discrimination in all our cultures are so systemically deep that our grasp of the proper questions in this transition is tenuous, let alone the potential solutions. Psychologists are only now discovering differences in the moral development of men and women. "The disparity between women's experience and the representation of human development, noted throughout the psychological literature, has generally been seen to signify a problem in women's development," says psychologist Carol Gilligan. "Instead, the failure of women to fit existing models of human growth may point to a problem in the representation, a limitation in the conception of human condition, an

omission of certain truths about life.”<sup>13</sup> In short, we operate out of two different realities.

A high percentage of women who choose to accept ordination will probably adapt, rather than bring their own individual femaleness to redefine ministry, office, and authority. Women will be *assimilated*, and this coalescence will be male-defined and male-determined, since administrative decision-makers at every level will continue to be male for long into the future. If women were *integrated* this could begin the necessary changes in the structure because of their different reality.<sup>14</sup> This would mean involving a variety of confident women in very substantial ways in the planning and decisions regarding the effectuation of those plans. The equality I hope for is not “sameness” but equality in our right to individuality and autonomy.

I have heard some men express their hope that women entering the priesthood will change the structure. This seems an unrealistic expectation when the same men are already in the system, some even in positions of power, and have not been able to effect these hoped-for changes. However, the execution of the new directive may cause such a wrenching that changes of structure will become more conceivable. Traditionally all-male professions and trades have been devalued when women enter those fields. This disposition has possibilities for leading us into a long-delayed examination of ordination and organization.

The design of RLDS priesthood calls, which Paul Edwards has described, is capricious in my view and will result in problems unique to our denomination. I say capricious because there are no clear-cut qualifications, and total responsibility for the “call” is in the hands of individual administrators. The pain involved in the struggle to implement this action will illuminate the existing misogyny. I agree with Beverly Harrison when she says, “it is never the mere presence of women, not the image of women, not fear of ‘femininity,’ which is the heart of misogyny. The core of misogyny, which has yet to be broken or even touched, is that reaction which occurs when women’s concrete power is manifest, when we women live and act as full and adequate persons in our own right.”<sup>15</sup> Women will be perceived out of a different perspective now that they are ordainable, and this “core of misogyny” will emerge from the darkest and most unexpected corners. If this bigotry is recognized and overcome, it could result in growth, and this is heartening.

The problem of language could involve another paper, if not a book. Our denomination has not yet been able to deal with the predominant use of male imagery relative to God. The inclusive language policy adopted in 1978 did not confront this aspect of sexism in language. Will women in the priesthood

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<sup>13</sup> Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 1–2; see also Anne Wilson Schaeff, *Women’s Reality: An Emerging Female System in the White Male Society* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Winston Press, 1981).

<sup>14</sup> See L. Madelon Brunson, “Scattered Like Autumn Leaves: Why RLDS Women Organize,” in *Restoration Studies II* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1983), pp. 125–32.

<sup>15</sup> Beverly Wildung Harrison, “The Power of Anger in the Work of Love: Christian Ethics for Women and Other Strangers,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 36 (Supplementary, 1981): 42.

help us deal with the predominant male imagery relative to God, or will our predominant male imagery relative to God deter us from accepting female ministry?

In the dualistic system of thought, ordination of women was the only answer. There will be pain for everyone. We now have a broader base of discrimination. But there will also be joy for the women set free to touch people at the essence of their being through the symbolic acts of the ordinances.

The priesthood-of-all-believers philosophy still claims my attention. Our over-emphasis on ecclesiastical authority prevents us from perceiving as "ministers" those who act authoritatively through their caring and presence to human need. Acceptance of the "all are called" (RLDS D&C 119:8b) quote cited in the 1984 document signifies the priesthood-of-all-believers attitude. Yet the very act of ordination separates us. There are those who are ordained, and there are the "others."

My primary concern is that resolving the enactment of the ordination of women, which is already so long overdue for we who call ourselves prophetic, will consume the energies needed in answering our greater call. My lament is that we seem unable to make a leap of faith which would carry us beyond concern over who shall sit on the right and who shall sit on the left — who is the lesser and who is the greater. I feel a sense of urgency that we make this leap of faith that would carry us to resolute commitment to justice and equality in a hungry, nuclear-shadowed world where love and worth of persons is still conditional.

## An Endowment of Power: The LDS Tradition

*Jill Mulvay Derr*

Latter-day Saints share a belief in and a commitment to the Restoration. The LDS and RLDS churches declare that God spoke to the Prophet Joseph Smith that a people might by covenant be commissioned. Latter-day Saints were given a charge — a mission to prepare the earth for the Savior's second coming — and the power or authority to carry out that mission accompanied the charge. RLDS Church President Wallace B. Smith in the "Inspired Document," now Section 156, issued in April 1984 expressed hope that, "inspired by the life and witness of the Redeemer of the world, his people might move toward giving "new life and understanding" to the "essential meaning of the Restoration as a healing and redeeming agent."

The document itself brings new understanding to the meaning of the Restoration. Who shall be called to share the burdens and responsibilities of the priesthood? The document affirms that all will be "called according to the gifts which have been given them" and that Church members should "not won-

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