

Beyond Tyranny, Beyond Arrogance

Paul James Toscano

MY HONEYMOON WITH THE CHURCH LASTED FOR FIVE YEARS, between 1961 when I was converted and 1966 when I went on my mission. During that period, I had had inklings that there was trouble in store for me, but I didn't actually come face to face with it until my final mission interview with my bishop. In order to get my call, I had to lie.

It was a hot California night, and I was at the bishop's house, sitting at the kitchen table, signing the papers that had to be sent to Salt Lake. Out of the blue, he asked me if I had a testimony of Joseph Smith. I assured him that I did, and then I tried to impress him. (I often felt the need to impress Church leaders then.) I told him about some research I had done at BYU the previous spring and how I'd learned that Joseph Smith had probably taken his first plural wife as early as 1831.

The bishop went cold. After a full thirty seconds of silence, he said in a voice that was suddenly grave and authoritarian and not quite his own: "Elder, Joseph Smith never practiced polygamy. That is a false teaching of the apostate Reorganized Church."

It took me a few moments to sort out the problem. Several responses ran through my mind. And then, I decided to object. But I thought it would be prudent to put my objection in the form of a question: "Bishop," I asked, "isn't it the other way around? Isn't it the Reorganized Church that denies Joseph ever practiced polygamy?"

He never batted an eye. "Elder," he said starkly, "I'm not going to let you serve a mission if you believe in false doctrine and if you have a rebellious attitude."

It was then, as I looked into his frowning face, that I saw — for the first time — the dark underbelly of Mormon ecclesiastical authoritarianism; and I realized that I had a problem. That's when I decided to lie.

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"I'm sorry," I said, humbly. "I must've gotten mixed up. I didn't know it was false doctrine. I'm just a convert."

Apparently I hit upon the right tack. My bishop smiled broadly and patted me on the shoulder. "It's best to leave the mysteries alone," he said. "Don't be too sure of yourself, Elder. There is safety in obeying the counsel of your leaders."

I nodded.

"I think there's a lesson for you in this, Elder," he said.

That was true. But it would be a long time before I understood it.

Over the next ten years, my encounters with Church authoritarianism became more frequent and more unpleasant. But, strangely enough, they never quenched my own lust for power. If anything, they fueled it. I guess, on some obscure and confused level, I had decided that the way to escape Church authoritarianism was to become a Church authority myself.

My confusion began to clear in the middle seventies, while I was in law school studying about order and liberty.

During this period, I learned about the Lockean school, a group of political philosophers who promulgated the concept of ordered liberty — the idea that political powers are inherent in people and that the sovereign can legitimately use those powers only in a limited way and only with popular consent, so that individuals in a community might reserve to themselves the widest possible residuum of rights and powers to achieve their private, social, and economic objectives.

This viewpoint, I learned, was opposed by others for whom ordered liberty seemed inadequate. If people are left free, they asked, will not the strong prey upon the weak? Moral order is essential to happiness. So the counter-concept developed that power is not inherent in individuals but in the community as a whole and that this power is to be exercised by a chosen (not necessarily democratically chosen) elite with the knowledge and experience to carry out the moral objectives of the community. These moral objectives usually take one of two forms: moral decency or equality. If community leaders see some crime, such as pornography, as the most dangerous threat to the community, they will use the power of the community to eliminate the criminal activity or the criminal element. If inequality is perceived as the greatest threat, then the police power will be used to achieve an equitable redistribution of wealth or privilege. In either case, moral order is achieved by granting to the sovereign elite the widest possible margin of authority to achieve its social and economic goals and to prevent individuals from creating enclaves of indecency or pockets of privilege and, thus, interfering with the community master plan.

In law school, as I quarried out this information in spoonfuls, I was led to wonder: Is not forced morality the greatest of the immoralities? If a community uses force to promote morality, then how can the community itself be moral? And how can equality be enforced without conferring an unequal amount of power upon the enforcers? Therefore, must not every egalitarian society be, *per force*, an elitist society? My head was buzzing with thoughts of morality, equality, and liberty, and in the end I concluded that the greatest of these is liberty.

These insights altered my love-hate relationship with Church authority which, by 1977–78, I had come to despise in the incompetent, but which I still admired in the competent — particularly me, for I was a third-year law student and I considered myself one of the most competent persons I knew. And then quite suddenly, in my last months of law school, I changed my mind. I underwent a paradigm shift. I came to see that authority and power could corrupt even the competent — yes, even me. My watchwords became “Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God” and “Trust not in the arm of flesh.” It was very exhilarating to say these things. And thus it was that, in the spring of 1978, I was born again: I became a child of the sixties. I was late, I know. I’m used to being late. So it didn’t embarrass me to join the revolution just after it was over when everyone else was cashing in its ideals for money market certificates and convertible debentures.

After law school I married Margaret, and my authority problems got worse. This had nothing to do with her. It was just that we didn’t seem to fit in anywhere. We both quite *liked* the gospel and liked talking about it. This fact, coupled with some strange rumors about us, led some of our ecclesiastical leaders to conclude that we were simultaneously anti-Mormons, polygamists, and born-again Jesus-freaks. Rather a tall order, even for us. After eight years we can look back at these events and laugh, but at the time these accusations were painful and alienating. During this period, we both realized that we didn’t fit into the Mormon mainstream, but our beliefs and loyalties made us reluctant then to see ourselves as Mormon independents.

Let me digress from my odyssey momentarily to explain my usage of the terms “mainstream” and “independent.” I’ve chosen them not only to avoid such heavily loaded labels as conservative and liberal, or intellectual and non-intellectual, or even *liahona* and *iron-rodder*, but because I think the terms suggest that the difference between these two types of Mormons lies in the value each puts upon order and liberty. Let me explain.

The Church is not monolithic. I don’t think it would be accurate, for example, to represent the Church population by a single bell curve, with the mainstream clustered in the center. This dromedarian or single-humped view of Church demographics gives the false impression that mainstreamers are central and independents are at the fringe. I think the population of the Church is better represented by a Bactrian view: two bell curves to the left and right of center, slightly overlapping, with the larger curve, representing mainstream thinkers, to the right and the smaller curve, representing independent thinkers, to the left.

Both groups contain faithful people, reasonable people, and some embarrassing people. Both have their share of agnostics and atheists. What distinguishes one group from the other is that mainstream thinkers believe that spiritual and intellectual growth is more likely to result from a commitment to the values of the Church community, while independent thinkers believe that such growth is more likely to result from a commitment to individual spiritual values. Thus, mainstreamers see value principally in order, while independents see it principally in liberty.

By the end of the seventies, I realized that I had somehow landed in the demographic saddle between the humps of this Bactrian camel. Like independent thinkers, I don't trust authoritarianism, and I like freedom of expression and freedom of conscience. But like mainstream thinkers, I see value in the Church community, its ordinances, and in the love and affection that can be found among its members.

In my view, neither of these groups is bad. If anything, they are inevitable. But the difference in their values and orientation makes rivalry and suspicion inevitable, too. With dismay, I have seen the rise of crusading individuals and publications in both camps, the public display of lack of affection between them, and the rise of publicly acknowledged leaders on each side of the line of demarcation.

During the eighties, this gap has widened as a result of events and stories of events such as the Packer/Quinn exchange, the McConkie/England exchange, the William Clayton journal affair, the Church Historical Department affair, the disagreement over sacred vs. secular Church history, and the publication of such books as *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith, America's Saints*, *The Mormon Corporate Empire*, *Mormon Polygamy: A History*, and by many of the articles appearing in *DIALOGUE* and *Sunstone*, including my wife's article, "The Missing Rib" (*Sunstone* 10:7 [July 1985], pp. 16–22).

As the mainstream and independent camps become more defined, there will be, I am afraid, a continuing tendency on the part of each to alienate itself more and more from any truth or good which the other camp has to offer. And, as each side retreats more deeply into its own prejudices, there is an increasing likelihood that tyranny and arrogance will arise in both camps.

In the context of Mormonism, "tyranny" means the use of authority and power to dominate, control, or manipulate others, while "arrogance" is the attitude of self-importance or pride often used to justify power abuses. Tyranny and arrogance are the chief components of oppression, an omnivore that can thrive in a community dedicated to freedom as well as it can in one dedicated to order.

My own struggle with authority — both my lust for it and my aversion to it — has probably made me oversensitive to oppressive mentalities and activities. This is why I am so worried about the signs of oppression I see appearing in both Mormon camps. Perhaps the most subtle and dangerous of these signs is the failure on the part of leaders in both groups to understand and articulate the limitations on their use of power.

Power is seductive. And leaders, especially religious, moralistic, or humanitarian ones, can be tempted to believe that power is safe in their hands. After all, they're the good guys. That's how I felt in the early seventies. But I have come to agree with Lord Acton: "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." This applies to everyone, including leaders in the Church, not only mainstreamers, but independents, too.

A story may illustrate my point: While I was in law school I wrote a class paper called *The Oath and Covenant of the Melchizedek Priesthood*. It was about fifty pages long, and I put in 149 notes, quoting biblical scholars and

legal sources. Very interesting stuff. For a class paper, I thought it was a *tour de force*. I got a C+. The teacher and I had not gotten along, and I was convinced this grade was his retribution.

I had never confronted a teacher over a grade before; but, as I said, I was a third-year law student, and besides feeling competent, I was also feeling litigious. He physically threw me out of his office after telling me in the clearest possible language that the grade would not be changed. He said that it was not the type of paper called for. I reminded him that the call for papers had been fairly open-ended; and besides, didn't I deserve some credit for creativity. He said that he was the teacher and I was the student, and he would be the judge of that. What's more, he wasn't going to talk about it with me. And moreover, my ideas about priesthood were simply ludicrous. I retorted that my conclusions were based on research and good evidence. He said that he knew a lot more about priesthood than I did because he had been a high priest for years, had served in a couple of stake presidencies and high councils, and he wasn't going to stand there and listen to me tell him about priesthood. That's when he took me by the arm and shoved me out. I was thinner then.

As his office door slammed behind me, I underwent another paradigm shift. Authority is not a substitute for competence. And competence is not a license to bully. Then, as I wandered off to the Cougar eat, I reran the video of my life at high speed, trying to recall how often I had abused knowledge or power. Had I been a priesthood tyrant? Had I been an arrogant little twit? The answer was a painful yes. But, thanks to a very fine selective memory, I can recall only a few examples of my own rigidity and narrowmindedness. A notable instance occurred in the early 1970s, when I found myself one of the priesthood leaders of the Twelfth Ward of the BYU Tenth Stake. I remember the surge of excitement I felt when I was called to a responsible position in the ward. With the enthusiasm of a Hitler Youth, I wholeheartedly backed the stake's requirement that home teaching visits be done *once a week*! Priesthood leadership meetings were not infrequently held at 6:00 A.M. on weekdays, and I found myself agreeing that young men who did not attend with wide-eyed enthusiasm were unworthy to serve in significant callings. I believed in Zion. We all believed in Zion. It was maybe the only way in which the idealism of the sixties was allowed to manifest itself at BYU, where hard rock, long hair, psychedelic colors, and student protest were thwarted by the Wilkinson administration. Yes, we all believed in Zion. Not bad in itself, perhaps. But we of the Tenth Stake were going to build it by complying perfectly — and requiring others to comply perfectly — with the “priesthood correlation program” — the revealed answer to all our problems. Under its aegis, we would march together, arms akimbo and in lock-step synchronization, into the highest glory. It is all too horrible to recall in any greater detail than this.

I have struggled hard to get beyond tyranny and beyond arrogance, not only that of others, but my own as well. I have come to believe that one of the most inspired parts of the Constitution of the United States is the Bill of Rights. I think it should be applied not only in the political sphere but in some sectors — perhaps the corporate sectors — of the private sphere, too. But espe-

cially in the Church. I think we rank and file Mormons are morally bound to assert and to exercise with maturity and boldness the inalienable rights of freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press and to accord to others and insure for ourselves the rights of due process and equal treatment not only under the law of the land, but of the Church as well.

Of course, such notions have only aggravated my personal struggle to find a balance between religious order and liberty. I know now that I don't want to be arrogant or tyrannical and that I don't want to be the subject of tyranny or arrogance, either. But I also recognize that I have not yet learned how to escape tyranny while remaining as compliant as Church leaders would like me to be or how always to avoid arrogance while remaining true to my own beliefs.

It is the nature of my Mormon experience that has intensified this struggle. That experience has been unusual. I have been troubled to hear of the bishop whose penetrating interrogation into sexual behavior tended to arouse rather than palliate sexual feelings and of the general authority who habitually formed opinions without having any idea of the pertinent evidence or the countervailing points of view. Also disturbing is the story of the stake president who, to the standard requirements for a Church position or a temple recommend, added the requirement of a clean-shaven face for men and bras for women. Less known, I suspect, is the account of the high council that excommunicated an individual for committing adultery in the heart.

What concerns me is not that such things happen, but why they happen. I have a theory about how authoritarianism perpetuates itself in the Church. Leaders in the Church are selected from a rank and file who are taught that Church leaders are divinely inspired. Not much is said about how such leaders are inspired, and how this inspiration comes, or how it is to be recognized, or how it ought to be put to the test, or how, in some cases, it should be rejected as sheer prejudice. So when one of the rank and file suddenly finds himself (or sometimes herself) elevated to some Church office, for example the office of stake president, he is likely to believe that every thought that enters his head, or every action he takes, or doctrine he believes, or every sentimental feeling that washes over him is a manifestation of the divine will. The fewer doubts a leader tends to have about such things, the more apt he is to rely on such "inspiration" regardless of its spirituality, intellectual rigor, or wisdom.

This problem is complicated by the fact that many Church leaders are trained to ignore any spiritual gifts in people with lesser Church status than themselves. Thus, the first counselor will usually feel free to question the ideas of the second counselor, but not the ideas of the bishop, even if the bishop is in outer space. So what we have in the Church is a spiritual pecking-order, which neatly disposes of the spiritual maturity, experience, and gifts of the rank and file.

All this is worsened by the Church's claim to have a lay priesthood in which every worthy male can participate in Church administration, when, in fact, priesthood authority is under tight hierarchical control and by the fact that the Church says very little about the limits of such authority. We have Section 121 of the Doctrine and Covenants, but not much elaboration. Members may

recognize unrighteous dominion, but they have very few guidelines for defense.

But although I consider myself to have been the victim of an unusually curious list of abuses of ecclesiastical authority (and I can quite easily be persuaded to rehearse a litany of them to any sympathetic audience), I must admit that not all my experiences with the hierarchy have been wretched. With but one exception, I think, all the bishops I have known have been kind, spiritual, and have tried hard to be understanding. A bishop in Orem called me as a gospel doctrine teacher in spite of the opposition of the high priest group leaders. Our bishop in Taylorsville called Margaret and me to team teach a class on the Gospel of John, in spite of the opposition of the stake president, who, although he had never met us, had heard some of those old rumors and judged us accordingly.

The problem of tyranny and arrogance in the mainstream camp is, I am sure, matched by the same problem, perhaps more subtly manifest, among independents, where power abuses are more likely to be manifest in the form of manipulation, cover-up, coercion, character assassination, and the suppression of ideas. And just as mainstreamers can be tempted to think that authority is competence, independents can be tempted to think that their competence is unlimited. For historians, statisticians, scientists, and social scientists — scholars in general — are more apt to make claims rather than disclaimers for their disciplines. Moreover, they normally do not lay bare the pet peeves, religious biases, and intellectual prejudices that may color such endeavors as the choice of a subject to research and analyze, or the selection of a thesis or historical question, or the data to be included and excluded from a particular treatment, or the choice of tone, or of audience, or of acceptable and unacceptable hypotheses, or of language and rhetoric to shape and cloak the ideas. We are, if possible, even more reticent about divulging our own personal hurts, hostilities, rejections, and failed hopes — all of which may affect our treatment of a given topic.

In my view, scholars are duty bound to state their prepossessions and predilections. It is not a particular bias that disqualifies a scholar, but an unwillingness to see it and disclose it. Normally, the audience is left to adduce these biases from the grapevine: Did scholar X really once have a falling out with a certain Church president? Was scholar Y's grandfather really excommunicated for taking a post-manifesto polygamous wife even though the marriage was performed by an apostle? Is scholar Z really anti-semitic, or homophobic, or pro-feminist? This information usually has a bearing upon the weight we give to works of scholarship and the light in which we read them.

This is so despite the contrary argument that the serious Mormon scholarship being produced today is the product of objectivity and that the conclusions reached therein do not reflect such personal and mundane biases, but are conclusions mandated by the facts.

Such nondisclosures amount, in my opinion, to manipulation or even suppression of important information. I also think it is fair to say that the independent camp sometimes gives short shrift to those who do not approach Mormonism with certain "acceptable" assumptions, methodologies, and conclu-

sions, and who do not express themselves in value-neutral rhetoric. A Mormon scholar who deviates from these standards is likely to get something of a chilly reception, rather like what might happen if I were suddenly to bear a tearful testimony during a presentation at the Sunstone Symposium.

The mainstream, too, can be dishonest or disinformative, especially if it is attempting to sequester data that may prove damaging or embarrassing. When, for example, was the last time anyone heard, in a general conference, a disclosure by the Church of its income and expenditures? Today we are treated to a rather curious circumlocution by the auditor that the Church uses standard accounting procedures. But never is there a single word uttered about where the money comes from or where it goes — let alone how much there is. The report is remarkable for the absence in it of a single dollar figure. I understand that most businesses keep their financial records private. But I object to this practice when it is employed by the Church because, by doing this, the Church not only tacitly adopts a business practice repugnant to its spiritual mission (and thereby suggests that there is some economic nastiness to be covered-up) but it also withholds its financial information from its own members, while insisting that they, in turn, be fully transparent to the Church about their private finances. This one-way transparency is another form of disinformation that shields those in power from accountability for its use.

Apparently neither camp of Mormonism can see the need for a balance between the rational and the intuitive approaches, but prefers instead a one-sided orthodoxy predicated on one modality or the other. This too results in disinformation.

Look at the treatment of Joseph Smith. Mainstream thinkers tend to idealize him, while independent thinkers tend to desecrate him. Thus he is depicted in terms of uncreditable panegyric or unedifying exposé.

In visitors' centers, Church movies, pamphlets, lesson manuals and spoken addresses, we are presented with Joseph the Unblemished Lamb — the young, pure-minded, religiously puzzled frontier seeker to whom the Father and the Son appeared and whom they established not only as the head of the dispensation of the fulness of times, but as the ideal son, the ideal brother, the ideal athlete and husband, father and leader. Because the mainstream has adopted Joseph as an ideal role model, his image must remain perfectly smudgeless. He must remain the noble martyr. And any negative assessment of him must be the slander of anti-Mormonism. This is the sanitized Joseph, scrubbed, shampooed, and always clad in a clean white shirt.

In the scholarly journals and histories of independents, however, we find the Joseph of occult beginnings and tantalizing historical gaps and inconsistencies, the glib and persuasive peep-stoner of Palmyra, the money-digging, dowsing, huckster with a penchant for plagiarism and a weakness for brass bands and orgasm. This is the debunked Joseph, the product not only of anti-Mormonism, but of some who claim to be writing objective Mormon history.

I realize that this is something of an overstatement. I have a weakness, I am told, for overstatement. For the record, I want to say that *all* my overstatement is *always* intentional. I do it to promote the doubtful cause, in our closed

community, of providing a counterweight to both understatement and non-statement. However, my own predilection for this type of expression has not blinded me to the fact that scholars and historians of Mormonism have mostly written moderate portrayals of Joseph Smith. My own use of hyperbole is not meant to deny the existence of the moderate views, but to emphasize that the spectrum is defined by the extremes, and that it is the tendency of some individuals to gravitate toward them.

So we have Joseph the Sacred — a model to help the mainstream enforce moral order. And then we have Joseph the Profane, an icon to ward off spiritual or ecclesiastical pressures. But these are not portraits of Joseph. They are caricatures that serve, primarily, as a litmus test for ascertaining which camp of Mormonism an individual is loyal to. The mainstream is apt to dismiss those who hold less than the idealized view of Joseph as liberals or apostates, while the independents are apt to dismiss those who hold more than the debunked view of Joseph as mere apologists.

Thus, the mainstream press cannot deal forthrightly with Joseph's plural marriages, which are an affront to the Church's modern view of chastity and morality. On the other hand, the independent Mormon press has not yet convincingly dealt with the spiritual meaning plural marriage may have had for those who introduced it into the Church.

I think it is futile to judge Mormonism by the actions or motives of Joseph Smith, who, in my view, was caught between the ordination of the heavens and the permutations of the earth, trapped between the paradoxical demands of his earthly nature and his heavenly visions, between the needs of the individual and of the community, between civilization and the wilderness, between the world and the Church, between the Saints and God — the struggling imperfect prophet *in* whom God's work was unfinished and *through* whom God's work remains unfinished.

Perhaps Joseph is not an ideal anything and cannot readily be used to justify either an obsession for moral order and ecclesiastical authority or an obsession for personal freedom and individual competence.

Perhaps God, having foreseen that Mormon mainstreamers would develop a fetish for self-righteousness, called, as the founding prophet of the Church, a prodigal. And perhaps, having foreseen that Mormon independents would develop a fetish for the urbane, God launched the restoration through a magician. Seen from this perspective, Joseph is not just a problem to both camps, he is an antidote: a corrective to the idea that Christian salvation is the wages of either human righteousness or human intellect, but that it remains, as always, the gift of God to all who will, like Joseph Smith, struggle to repent, struggle to forgive, and struggle to bear the crosses of the world and despise the shame.

Earlier, I urged scholars, speakers, and writers to disclose their prejudices so that readers and listeners could better judge how they are handling their material. Obviously, it's only fair to tell you about my biases.

My strategy for coping with the on-going "crisis" of my faith is not to abandon my beliefs but rather to believe in more and more. This process has

gone on for some time. Today I believe in a large and odd assortment of things: I believe in justification by grace and sanctification by the blood of Christ, the literal resurrection from the dead, and the whole of Christian eschatology with Christ coming at the end of the world, red in his apparel.

But when it comes to cosmology, my views are quite unorthodox. People who know me wonder if there is any religious idea I don't believe in. For me, there is but one true way of salvation but many true ways of worship. I believe in the worship of Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and mystics of the East and the West. I have worshipped with many of them and have been edified. I have rejoiced with pagans and have come to respect the skepticism of agnostics and atheists. I may be the last person on earth, except for Margaret, who believes in the Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Norse gods. And in elves and fairies, and angels that bring gold plates. I believe in those, too. I am not bothered by improbabilities. The whole universe appears improbable to me. Yet there it is.

I believe that none of us and that none of our religions has the corner on the truth. We must get the truth where we can, even in Masonry and magic. The Lord is at the center of it all. And his glory has seeped into everything. Our calling is to mine it like gold.

I have come to realize that we are all oppressed and that we are all oppressors. At times I fear there is no escape from the jaws of this dilemma. But in my heart I believe there is an escape. Christ has shown us the way. It is the way of the cross.

It comes down to humility — a humility I have never been able satisfactorily to achieve — a willingness to accept the good in our rivals and our opposites, the humility of those who, while desperate for liberty, continue to respect order, of those who while questing for order, continue to honor liberty. It is the humility of women who, in spite of everything, continue to acknowledge the good in men and of men who can, without fear, acknowledge the power in women. It is a very idealistic notion I am advocating, the notion that the wise must not envy the beautiful nor the beautiful the wise, that the poor must not despise the rich nor the rich the poor, that the high must abase themselves that the low may be exalted. And it must happen not just once, but over and over again, forever.

Envy is the enemy of reconciliation, and I see reconciliation as the only way to close the widening wound in Mormonism. Because I have come to accept the claims of Jesus Christ, I see that reconciliation in terms of him, alone — in his words, yes — but also in the pattern of his works.

It seems to me that the words of the Old Testament are a witness against tyranny, against the oppression of the powerless by the powerful; and it seems to me, too, that the words of the New Testament are a witness against arrogance, against the pride and the prudence of the wise.

Christ himself rejected the tyranny of the Jews and the arrogance of the Greeks. He was a rebuke to both. He opposed both worldly status and worldly wisdom, and the oppression that issues from them. But his chief rebuke consisted not in his words, but in his works — in his condescension and crucifixion. For if God had to die to be reconciled to his enemies, must we not do the same?

For me the greatest story in literature has for its hero God himself. It begins: "A certain man had two sons." It is well known. There was the stay-at-home grumbling son who covets wealth and stability, and there is the libertine prodigal who wants his freedom. Their father divides their inheritance between them. When the prodigal has wasted his substance with riotous living and has nothing to eat except pigs' husks and nowhere to go but home, he returns. "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke 15:11-32). He kills a fatted calf and makes a feast for this son who had hoped only for a servant's status. But his elder brother, angry, will not go in. I've served you all these years, he says to his father. I've never sinned. And you never gave me a ring, a robe, or a feast, nor killed the fatted calf for me. But as soon as your whoremongering son comes home, you do it all for him. The father explains: All that I have is thine, just as all that I have is your brother's. Can you not love one another, as I have loved you? Can you not see in each other the good I see in you? Can you not rejoice when the lost is found or the dead return to life?

I am still trapped between liberty and order, between my desire and my distaste for Church authority. My personal struggle is not over. Perhaps it will not be over until my life is over. God willing, it will be over then. But I have concluded at least this: It is only in the marriage of opposites in Christ Jesus that there is freedom *and* order — and repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, immortality, and eternal life.

If we are to be free, it seems to me, we must let him crucify in us our inflated opinions of ourselves and our inflated expectations of others. I believe this is the only way each of us can finally be healed. It is the only way we can come to accept all that plenitude of good that God has reserved for us in the hands of those whom we have esteemed to be our enemies.

Regardless whether we count ourselves in the mainstream or among the independents, if we Mormons are ever to get beyond tyranny and beyond arrogance, it will be only in and through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the judge of the oppressor and the advocate of the oppressed.