

Eternity Be Damned? The Impact of Interfaith Vows

Introduction

Karen Marguerite Moloney

IN ANY RELIGION THAT stresses the importance of marriages between its members, choosing to marry someone of another faith is not a casual act. In fact, marrying outside the home faith is likely to incur serious opposition from family and friends—and can even make the person who does so a second-class citizen in his or her own church. At a minimum, interfaith marriage is likely to create—or increase—marital conflicts over such matters as church attendance, child rearing, and value and belief systems. In addition, Latter-day Saints must wrestle with the question of the eternal status of their marriage: does choosing to marry someone other than a Latter-day Saint effectively exclude one from exaltation—or even from the celestial kingdom? Does it mean that, no matter how deep the love or successful the marriage in this life, death dissolves the relationship, dooming two who became one to become two again—for all eternity? Or, assuming the Latter-day Saint has been faithful in every other way, will that person be “reassigned” to another spouse at some unknown point beyond death? Would he or she even *want* to be?

In view of such uncertainty, the Mormon spouse in an interfaith marriage may feel inordinate pressure to convert the non-Mormon spouse, sometimes imposing additional strain on their relationship.

KAREN MARGUERITE MOLONEY, a lecturer at UCLA Writing Programs, organized the panel for the Sunstone Symposium, August 1989, where versions of the following papers were first presented.