

Women and Priesthood*

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I SMILED WRYLY AT THE CARTOON on the stationery. The picture showed a woman standing before an all-male ecclesiastical board and asking, "Are you trying to tell me that God is not an equal opportunity employer?" I thought to myself, "Yes, that is precisely what women have been told for centuries." In fact, we have been assured of it for so long that until recently it was almost unthinkable to question the situation. I thought too of the times I had been asked by LDS women, in whispered tones, "How do you feel about women holding the priesthood?" It is a question which has hardly been raised except in whispers among Mormons, let alone treated with enough respect to warrant serious consideration. When a non-LDS reporter asked President Kimball about the possibility of ordaining women, the reply was "impossible."¹ Members of the church generally regard this response as adequate and definitive. I perceive, however, dissatisfaction among Mormon women over the rigidly defined "role" church authorities consistently articulate for women. This dissatisfaction has been noticeably manifested in such developments as the heightened interest in the less-traditional women role models in Mormon history, in the establishment of *Exponent II*, in "the dual platforms of Mormonism and feminism,"² and in the renewed interest in developing an understanding of the nature of our Heavenly Mother.³ As

*This essay first appeared in Vol. 14, No. 4 (Winter 1981): 48-57.

1. "Mormonism Enters a New Era," *Time*, 7 Aug. 1978, 56.

2. Claudia L. Bushman, "Exponent II Is Born," *Exponent II* 1 (July 1974): 2.

3. This interest is evidenced by the recent surge in writing about Mother in Heaven. Papers dealing with the subject have been presented at the last two Sunstone Theological Symposiums. Linda Wilcox, in her paper, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven" (published in the Sept.-Oct. 1980 issue of *Sunstone*), observed there "is an increasing awareness of and attention to the idea [of Mother in Heaven] at the grass-roots level in the Church." She noted that one of the judges for the Eliza R. Snow Poetry Contest said that year (1980) was the first year in which several poems were submitted about Mother in Heaven. Linda Sillitoe has made a similar observation in an article about Mormon women's poetry: "I suspect that more poems to or about our Mother in Heaven have been

we rethink our traditional place in both church and society, we will almost inevitably kindle discussion of the ordination of women.

Although the question of ordaining women is a new one for Mormons, it is not so new to Christendom. It has been widely, and sometimes hotly, debated for more than a decade. Christian feminists are taking a new look at scripture, and have found support for women's ordination—support which has always been there, but which until recently was unnoticed. Books and articles on the subject have proliferated.

The early Christian church had its beginnings in a culture which was deeply biased against women. Rabbinic teachings, developed during the post-Exilic centuries when Judaism was fighting to maintain its cultural and religious identity, often emphasized the strictest interpretations of the Torah. Women were subordinate to their husbands, not allowed to be witnesses in court, denied education, and restricted in religious practices. One rabbi, Eliezer, (reportedly expressing a minority view) went so far as to teach, "Whosoever teaches his daughter the Torah teaches her lasciviousness."⁴ Eve, of course, was blamed for the fact that man was no longer in a state of immortality and happiness, and devout male Jews prayed daily: "Blessed be God, King of the universe, for not making me a woman."⁵ All in all, women at the time of Jesus were more restricted than were women in the Old Testament. Yet early Christianity saw a brief flowering of new opportunities for women as new religious patterns cut across the deepest class divisions of society: race, condition of servitude, and sex. Wrote Paul, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

Many scholars now believe that women in this new religious com-

written in the last year or so by Mormon women than in all the years since Eliza R. Snow penned 'Our Eternal Mother and Father,' later retitled 'Oh My Father'" (Linda Sillitoe, "New Voices, New Songs: Contemporary Poems by Mormon Women," *Dialogue* 13, no. 4 [Winter 1980]: 58.) In addition, I have noticed what seems to be an increase in references to Mother in Heaven by individuals speaking from the pulpit in church services.

4. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), 16:626. See also Elisabeth M. Tetlow, *Women and Ministry in the New Testament* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 20-24.

5. Judith Hauptman, "Images of Women in the Talmud," *Religion and Sexism*, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 196. Hauptman argues that this prayer should not arouse the feminist ire it has provoked. She says it sounds worse out of its context than it actually is, and that it simply "expresses a man's gratitude for being created male, and therefore for having more opportunities to fulfill divine commandments than do women, who are exempted from a good many." For women seeking a broader range of participation within their religious communities, this argument would seem to confirm precisely the point they are attempting to make about the exclusiveness of those communities.

munity were permitted a broader participation than we generally acknowledge today. In fact, some New Testament passages refer to women in terms which indicate they were ecclesiastical leaders, although this meaning has been obscured by the way the passages are translated into English. Phoebe of Romans 16:1-2 was a woman of considerable responsibility within her religious community. Junia of Romans 16:7 is believed by many scholars to refer to a woman apostle. Indeed a Roman Catholic task force of prominent biblical scholars recently concluded,

An examination of the biblical evidence shows the following: that there is positive evidence in the NT that ministries were shared by various groups and that women did in fact exercise roles and functions later associated with priestly ministry; that the arguments against the admission of women to priestly ministry based on the praxis of Jesus and the apostles, disciplinary regulations, and the created order cannot be sustained. The conclusion we draw, then, is that the NT evidence, while not decisive by itself, points toward the admission of women to priestly ministry.⁶

It is not in the New Testament alone where we find precedents for a broader religious participation for women. The Old Testament also tells of women who rose to prominence despite the obstacles they faced in a culture which restricted them in many serious ways.⁷ Deborah and Huldah were prophetesses (Jdgs. 4, 2 Kgs. 22), but these women have rarely been held up as examples for LDS women to emulate. In fact, their existence as prophetesses is problematic to official Mormon commentators. The *Bible Dictionary* in the new church-published Bible lists Deborah simply as "a famous woman who judged Israel," with not a single word about her being a prophetess. Last year's Sunday school manual is even more judgmental. It expressly states, "Deborah is described as a 'prophetess' evidently because of her great righteousness and faith. However, she was not in any way a religious leader, for such is contrary to God's order and organization." The student is referred to Luke 2:36-38

6. The Task Force of the Executive Board of the Catholic Biblical Association of America, "Women and Priestly Ministry: The New Testament Evidence," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 41 (1979): 612-13. The Task Force was formed by the Executive Board "to study and report on the Role of Women in Early Christianity."

7. Included in the restrictions placed upon women in the Old Testament were those imposed during and after menstruation and following childbirth. Women were "unclean" during menstruation and for a week following their menstrual periods. During this time, they defiled everyone they touched and everything they sat or lay on (Lev. 15:19-30). Following childbirth, they were unclean, and the uncleanness lasted twice as long following the birth of a female child as it did following the birth of a male child (Lev. 12:1-8). If a man suspected his wife of unfaithfulness, he could cause her to go through a trial by ordeal to determine her guilt or innocence (Num. 5:12-31). Moreover, women are listed among a man's other articles of property as objects which are not to be coveted (Ex. 20:17).

and Acts 21:8-9, both of which tell of prophetesses who fit more neatly into Mormon notions about how women can be prophetesses.⁸ Huldah, whose influential prophecies both proved correct *and* were twice accompanied by "Thus saith the Lord," was omitted completely in the new *LDS Bible Dictionary*!⁹

By the standards of today's Mormon writers, the concept that a woman could be a prophetess—not in the limited sense of receiving personal revelation for herself and children or church calling, but rather for all God's people—is apparently unimaginable. Even though the Bible tells us very plainly of these women's activities, they have still been overlooked and their prophetic ministries discounted. If this can occur at a time when it is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore women's contributions to the Kingdom of God, it should come as no surprise to us that only the most remarkable of women would find their way into ancient scriptures. One might wonder how many other accomplished women were omitted.

Probably the most commonly cited justifications for assigning a subordinate role to women (and therefore excluding them from priesthood) are found in the writings of Paul. His ideas about women do not bear directly on women's ordination, since it would be possible for women to be priesthood bearers and to perform priesthood ordinances (such as administering the sacrament, baptizing, blessing the sick, etc.) while still occupying a subordinate position in the home and church. Nevertheless, it is important to discuss briefly a few of Paul's statements since they have had such a profound impact on Christian thinking and continue to be invoked to define what is and is not "proper" behavior for women.

It should be noted that some of the more restrictive passages about women appear in 1 Timothy and Ephesians, epistles whose Pauline authorship is in question among biblical scholars.¹⁰ Mormons have generally not made distinctions between Pauline and pseudo-Pauline writ-

8. *Old Testament Part I—Gospel Doctrine Teachers Supplement* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980), 163. These prophetesses include Anna, an elderly woman at the time of Jesus' birth, whose prophecy was that of bearing her testimony about Jesus "to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:36-38). The Bible also identifies Miriam (the sister of Moses) as a prophetess. The *Dictionary* lists Miriam but does not indicate she was a prophetess.

9. The old *Cambridge Bible Dictionary*, on which the new one is based, did list Huldah, stating that she was "a prophetess in Jerusalem in the time of Josiah." Thus the omission is not accidental. Likewise, in the case of Deborah, the old *Dictionary* listed her as a prophetess.

10. Many biblical scholars have dealt with the issue of authorship. One good source for readers who wish to have a better understanding of this issue is *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Charles M. Laymon (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), 834-35, and 883.

ings. Indeed the new *Bible Dictionary* does not hint at the controversy over authorship, and in fact goes so far as to assign Hebrews to Paul, although Hebrews itself makes no such claim.

Mormons have been highly selective in accepting and rejecting the teachings of Paul. On the one hand, we have rejected his counsel on such matters as celibacy (1 Cor. 7:8-9), on women speaking and teaching in church (1 Cor. 14:34-35, 1 Tim. 2:11-12), and on women wearing head coverings while praying or prophesying (1 Cor. 11:5). On the other hand, we have uncompromisingly accepted the idea of women's subordinate place in marriage (Eph. 5:22-24, 1 Cor. 11:3), and have extended this subordination to the church as well. This inconsistency stems, I believe, from a far too literal application of the epistolary understanding of the stories of the Creation and Fall. That is, a few passages in the epistles attempt to justify women's subordination by explaining that Eve was created after Adam and for his benefit (1 Tim. 2:13, 1 Cor. 11:7, 9), and that she was the first to "fall" (1 Tim. 2:14), thereby requiring all women to be subordinate to their husbands. We have taken this reasoning literally but have applied it selectively, rejecting part of the resulting counsel as culturally motivated while accepting part of it as eternal truth. We therefore permit (in fact, encourage) women to speak and teach in church (culture now permits that), but in doing so, women must remain subordinate to men (eternal proper order).

When Paul relies on Creation order for his male-female hierarchy, he alludes to the Creation story in Genesis 2. In this story, Adam is created first, then Eve. In contrast, the Genesis 1 story¹¹ relates that there was simultaneous creation of male and female in the image of God. Many Mormons view the Genesis 1 Creation story as spiritual creation and the Genesis 2 account as temporal creation,¹² thus seeing the two stories as separate events, rather than as contradictory stories about the same event. Even so, the "temporal" account of Creation, as understood by Mormons, need not provide a pattern of dominance and submission, since it is understood to be allegorical, not literal. Just how

11. Most biblical scholars see the two creation stories as ones handed down through two separate sources, the priestly source in which Elohim is the Creator, and the Yahwist source in which Yahweh is the Creator. See Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975), 211-13 and 426-36. Note that in the KJV, Genesis 1 says "God" was the creator, while Genesis 2 refers to "the LORD God" (with Lord in small capital letters). "God" has been used in place of "Elohim" while LORD God is used in place of Yahweh.

12. B. H. Roberts, however, speculated that there had actually been two creations on Earth. This was tied to his theory of pre-Adamites who were destroyed before Adam and Eve were placed on the earth. See Richard Sherlock, "The Roberts/Smith/Talmage Affair," *Dialogue* 13. No. 3 (Fall 1980): 65-66.

much literalism should be applied to the scriptural account is a question which has not, as far as I know, been conclusively stated. President Kimball has said that the story of the rib is "of course, figurative"¹³ and has also suggested that husbands should "preside" rather than "rule."¹⁴ In addition, he has stated that "distress" for women at the time of childbirth would be more correct than "sorrow."¹⁵ Although these changes in wording are few, they significantly alter the meaning of the text. If the significance is not immediately apparent, it is probably because our frame of reference is such that this new preferred wording reflects the changes which have already occurred in our thinking and in our marriages. If we could look at these changes from a broader historical vantage point (from the vantage point of the first century A.D., perhaps), we would see them as a major step toward more egalitarian relationships. That this sort of re-evaluation of the meaning of the stories can occur is evidence that the stories are not prescriptions for what must always be. As the facts about the way we live and think change and progress, so will our understanding of these scriptures.

Another Pauline argument for the subordination of women to men—"Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression"—is more problematic to Mormon theology, since Mormons view the Fall as an event both necessary and desirable for the progress of Adam and Eve and the entire human family, while simultaneously viewing it as a transgression meriting punishment. The story contains a double message which is difficult to explain in any way consistent with other aspects of Mormon theology. If, as Paul claims, Eve was truly deceived and Adam was not, then why should Eve's punishment be greater than Adam's? Should not the punishment be greater for one who *knowingly* disobeys than for one who is "deceived"? If, on the other hand, Eve was not deceived, but rather fell intentionally as some Mormon leaders have claimed,¹⁶ in order to bring about the necessary condition of mortality and knowledge of good and evil, then why is she punished more severely than Adam, who enters mortality only after she urges him to do so? Mormon writings and sermons are replete with accolades to our first parents for their willingness to "fall,"¹⁷ yet Eve is

13. In *Woman* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 80.

14. *Ibid.*, 83.

15. *Ibid.*

16. John A. Widtsoe, *Rational Theology as Taught by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965), 51. Widtsoe says, "The fall was a deliberate use of a law, by which Adam and Eve became mortal, and could beget mortal children. . . . The Bible account is, undoubtedly, only figurative."

17. For example, see Bruce R. McConkie, "Eve and the Fall," *Woman*, 57-68.

placed in a subordinate position to Adam for being the first to do that which she was sent to Earth to do. Moreover, Mormon belief holds that "men will be punished for their own sins and not for Adam's transgression,"¹⁸ yet *all* women are expected to give due submission to their husbands on account of Eve's transgression, an act over which no other woman has any control.

It would probably be more honest to admit that in Mormon theology Creation order and the Fall have little to do with women's position in marriage and in the church. Paul's statements on the subject serve as effective arguments for maintaining the status quo, but they are not at the root of the role designations of subordination for women and superordination for men. The real root of this hierarchical ordering, it seems to me, is the Mormon concept of man's, and woman's, ultimate destiny. Under this concept, woman is not subordinate to man because of Creation order and the Fall, but because God is male and because only men can become like God. Although it has become fashionable to give verbal affirmation to the equality of the sexes, and even to the *eternal* equality of the sexes,¹⁹ the fact is that our present-day concepts of heaven and eternal progression grew out of a theology which did not encompass any such egalitarian belief. For example, Orson Pratt said, "The Father of our spirit is the head of His household, and His wives and children are required to yield the most perfect obedience to their great Head."²⁰ Today's church leaders have said little about our Heavenly Mother's relationship to Heavenly Father and have not, to my knowledge, indicated whether they would agree with Orson Pratt. However, until we begin to see our ultimate destiny as a genuinely equal partnership, we will likely find it impossible to believe that women and men are inherently equal, and we will persist in using Pauline discourses about women to buttress our view that men are divinely designated to be eternal leaders, while women are divinely designated to be eternal followers. In a circular pattern of thinking, our concept of the heavens could continue to prevent us from allowing women to be leaders on earth, while the lack of women leaders on earth continues to cause us to project our earth-view into the heavens.

During the past several thousand years, the established pattern of who was authorized to act for God has varied significantly. It is possible to look at the circumstances of priesthood bearers from the time of Moses

18. 2nd Article of Faith.

19. For example, President Kimball has said, "We had full equality as God's spirit children. We have equality as recipients of God's perfected love for each of us" (Spencer W. Kimball, "The Role of Righteous Women," *Ensign* 9 [Nov. 1979]: 102).

20. Cited in Wilcox, "Mormon Concept," 14; from Orson Pratt, *The Seer* 1 (Oct. 1853): 159.

and see a pattern of expanding authorization. The time of Moses was a period of restrictiveness in which priesthood was limited to only one tribe of the House of Israel, the Levites. Christ widened the circle to include the Jews. Following Christ's death and resurrection, the circle expanded to include gentiles (including, seemingly, some women). Some ground was lost between then and the Restoration, but since the beginning of the church all men, except those of Negro ancestry, have been priesthood bearers. Then, in 1978, the circle expanded again to include all worthy males. Only women remain excluded. Perhaps the time is near when the circle can be widened again to include us all.

There are undoubtedly many women who prefer to remain excluded. They feel they enjoy all the blessings of the priesthood, while being free from its responsibilities. Yet the rising expectations of women today are causing many of us to re-examine our feelings about the strict role assignments which have circumscribed, compartmentalized, and divided us, male and female. I have often thought that those who feel women are not deprived by their exclusion from priesthood have not given much thought to how much women are denied by the exclusion. Filling important church offices is a great responsibility to be sure, but it is also a great opportunity for growth. Because women are denied priesthood, they are also denied this opportunity. In addition, they are denied the opportunity to be part of the ongoing decision-making process in our wards, our stakes, our church. In everything from deciding who will fill church callings to deciding where and when to purchase property, women are regularly asked to sustain decisions made by men, but they are given little opportunity to influence those decisions before they are made. Often these decisions have a great impact on women, as is the case when undertakings involving large time or financial commitments are openly discussed in priesthood meeting, without women being consulted about them.

Many women felt dismayed by the loss of autonomy they experienced when the Relief Society was "correlated," losing its magazine and the opportunity to raise and manage its own funds. While women were the ones most affected by these changes, they were not permitted to make the decision about how the Relief Society would be structured. The decision was made for them. By men.²¹ Hierarchical decision-making might well continue to cause dismay and dissent if women filled all church leadership positions on an equal basis with men, but the chances

21. Many women may have barely noticed the changes which occurred in the Relief Society in 1969-70, but others resented them. See Marilyn Warenski, *Patriarchs and Politics: The Plight of the Mormon Woman* (San Francisco: McGraw-Hill, 1980), 138-39.

of decisions being made which adversely affected women—such as the one a few years ago to deny women the opportunity to offer prayers in sacrament meeting—would be lessened, because women would be more likely than men, even well-meaning men, to be aware of how any given decision would affect other women. It is a simple matter of common experience.

Having an all-male priesthood affects our attitudes toward women and men more deeply than we realize. Many people sincerely believe that granting priesthood to men while denying it to women in no way influences their egalitarian ideals. But would we still feel the same if instead of an all-male priesthood, we had an all-female priesthood?

How would we feel if every leadership position (except those relating directly to men and children) were filled by a woman? If every significant problem had to be resolved by women? If every woman and every man who needed counseling from a spiritual leader had to be counseled by a woman? How would we feel if every member of the stake high council were a woman? If each month we received a message in sacrament meeting from a high councilwoman? If the presiding officer in all church meetings were a woman? If church courts were all held by women? How would we feel if we could ordain our twelve-year-old daughters, but not our sons? If each week our daughters blessed and passed the sacrament? If our young women were encouraged to go on missions, and our young men permitted to go only if they were older than our young women? If in the mission field all zone and district leaders were young women, to whom slightly older young men had to report? If our brother missionaries could teach investigators but were denied the privilege of baptizing and confirming them? How would we feel if only mothers could bless, baptize, and confirm their children? If men did most of the teaching of children, and women filled nearly all ward executive positions? If women addressed the annual men's general meeting of the church, to instruct them in how to best fill their role as men? Would men in this situation still be so sure that in the church men and women are equal, even though the men have a different role?

Before June 1978, we all readily understood that the denial of priesthood to black men was a serious deprivation. Singling out one race of men for priesthood exclusion was easily recognized as injustice, and most of us were deeply gratified to see that injustice removed by revelation. Yet somehow it is more difficult for many people to see denial of priesthood to women as a similar injustice. The revelation on behalf of black men apparently came in response to the heartfelt concern of church leaders for their brothers, a concern which moved them to "plead long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many

hours in the Upper Room of the Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance."²² It was only after these "many hours" of prayer that the revelation came. I long for the day when similar empathy can be evoked on behalf of our faithful sisters.

There can be little question about women's abilities to fill priesthood assignments and perform priesthood ordinances. Women are functioning as ecclesiastical leaders in many faiths and are finding themselves equal to the challenges. Even in our own culture and faith, women have demonstrated their abilities to heal the sick and pronounce prophetic blessings, functions which have come to be strictly associated with priesthood.²³ Also, while there is no precedent within the church for general ordination of women, there is a limited authority conferred upon women temple workers, who perform temple ordinances for women. Donna Hill has noted:

Traditionally, the Mormon priesthood has been reserved for males, but there may be reason to speculate whether some form of it was intended for females. Heber C. Kimball, in his journal entry for February 1, 1844, said that he and Vilate were anointed priest and priestess "unto our God under the hands of B. Young and by the ways of the Holy Order." The significance of the ordination is not made known. Benjamin Winchester in his Personal Narrative wrote that Joseph promised his sister Lucy Smith that he would make her a priestess and the highest woman in the church if she would accept polygamy, but she refused.²⁴

The Kimball journal entry could be a reference to temple ordinances, but the Winchester statement sounds like Joseph Smith may have had something different in mind. Certain aspects of our belief system support the idea of ordination of women, such as the fact that we believe women "will become priestesses and queens in the kingdom of God, and that implies that they will be given authority."²⁵

It is my hope that we will not become entrenched in an absolutist position which precludes the possibility of dialogue and change on this issue. I am reminded of the absoluteness of terms with which the policy

22. D&C Official Declaration 2.

23. Carol Lynn Pearson, *Daughters of Light* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973), esp. chaps. 3, 5, and 6. See also *Mormon Sisters*, ed. Claudia L. Bushman (Salt Lake City: Olympus Publishing Co., 1976), esp. chap. 1.

24. Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 484. The statement continues: "See Winchester in the collection of Charles Woodward, *First Half Century of Mormonism*, NYPL. I do not know of any corroboration of Winchester's statement."

25. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 3, Bruce R. McConkie, comp. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956), 178.

of denial of priesthood to black men was defended,²⁶ and I wonder, if we had not been so adamantly certain that the Negro doctrine could never change, might it have changed sooner than it did? What part do we, the membership, play in change? Does our readiness to accept change influence its timing?

The subject of women having priesthood will almost certainly become a topic of discussion in the future. Already missionaries in the United States are being faced with questions about why women are not ordained. I have had several female, nonmember acquaintances express—unsolicited—what one woman put very succinctly: “Some of your missionaries knocked on my door the other day. I told them to come back when Mormon women could be priests.” For many of us, if not most of us, equality of the sexes has entered into our consciousness as a correct principle. We may not yet fully *believe* that women and men are equal, but at least we believe that we *should* believe it. As we come to accept this principle more fully, the inevitable question arises: why should maleness be the ultimate determiner of who shall be authorized to act in the name of God?

Men and women alike rightly consider the priesthood a great gift from God, and the right to bear the priesthood a special honor, an honor which is denied to women. If the day comes—and I believe it will—when women and men alike will be bearers of both the blessings and burdens of the priesthood, the artificial barriers of dominance and submission, power and manipulation, which sometimes strain our male-female relationships will lessen, and we will all be freer to choose our own paths and roles. In Christian unity, we will go forward together, with power to bless our own lives and the lives of others, and with opportunity for a fuller, richer spiritual life and participation for all the children of God.

26. Brigham Young taught, “When all the other children of Adam have had the privilege of receiving the Priesthood, and of coming into the kingdom of God, and of being redeemed from the four quarters of the earth, and have received their resurrection from the dead, then it will be time enough to remove the curse from Cain and his posterity” (JD 2:143). This and similar statements have been reiterated in such works as Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1958), 106, and in John L. Lund, *The Church and the Negro* (1967), 45-49.

Women's Issues

Thank you for another superb issue of *Dialogue* (Vol. 14, No. 4). I laughed all the way through Furr's "Honor Thy Mother," only to have the end punctuated by a telephone call from one of the Sunday School presidency asking me to be the "Young Mother," sandwiched between "Love at Home" and "What My Mother Means to Me by a Teenager." Sitting through a Mother's Day program is one thing, but aiding and abetting? Then inspiration struck and, armed with the pink and red issues of *Dialogue*, I gave a talk that brought tears and laughter, knowing nods, and sighs of satisfaction. Once again, thank you for a job well done.

Linda J. Bailey
San Jose, California
from Vol. 15, No. 3 (Autumn 1982)

I have read many provocative articles in *Dialogue* but never felt so overwhelmed by anything as I did on reading "Matricidal Patriarchy: Some Thoughts toward Understanding the Devaluation of Women in the Church," by Erin R. Silva, in the summer 1994 issue. I was so moved by the obviously clear understanding of the very depth of a woman's soul. I felt every fiber of my being laid bare by Silva's work. It wasn't until I reached the end of the article that I understood the force of his words. Erin R. Silva is a man. I had been so certain this was written by a woman that I found myself discounting so many areas of his abilities. I now realize that even women discount other women. If Erin R. Silva, a male, can reach such profound depths of emotion to truly understand the devaluation of women in the church, there is hope for us all. I have never felt such a powerful explosion of truthfulness as he has exhibited with such eloquence. If I have jeopardized my position in the church by taking this position, I will ask my husband and children to understand and keep loving me. This time I can't help but speak.

Thank you so much for publishing these wonderful works.

Shari Taylor
Los Osos, CA
from Vol 28, No. 2 (Summer 1995)

I have been an avid reader of *Dialogue* for many long years now—practically a charter member, although I was myself only thirteen when *Dialogue* was born and made its sure way into the book rack in my parental home—and I am often renewed, educated, strengthened, incensed, and moved by its pages. I am even now discussing with my husband certain of the articles in the Winter 1990 issue with fervor, concern, and pleasure. And yet, my experience with the Fall 1990 issue was of such a transcendental nature that it somehow went beyond all of my previous experiences. Is it, I am moved to wonder, because of the sense of shared sisterhood that accompanied me on my journey through its pages? A sense of shared truth, grief, knowledge, power, and commitment? Whatever the reality of my experience may be, each moment of oneness with the worlds therein spoke to me with a directness and raw urgency that was at once sweet and almost too inexpressibly painful to bear. Thank you.

Kimberlee Staking
Bourron-Marlotte, France
from Vol. 29, No. 3 (Fall 1991)