

En Route: A Journey of the Spirit

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In the introduction to his epic short story, "A River Runs Through It," Norman Maclean wrote that his primary aim was to let his "children know what kind of people their parents are or think they are or hope they are."¹ This sentiment captured my initial purpose in crafting this essay. Dealing chiefly with my evolving spiritual life, it is the story of a youth whose extended family took religion seriously, even seriously enough to live peaceably with its great diversity of belief; it is the tale of a free spirit butting heads with a tightly disciplined institution; and it is the record of a family spiritual legacy, one noticeably different in beliefs and loyalties than the typical Latter-day Saint has come to know and cherish through his or her heritage.

Religious Heritage and Harsh Realities

My upbringing was spiritually compelling and personally rich, though my early years hardly lacked challenges. When I look back, the good forces that bore on me as a youth place me among the most fortunate of children launched in those years following the Great Depression and straddling World War II. Born and reared near Dayton, Ohio, I grew up in a home where religion frequently surfaced as a lively subject of conversation. Mother's mother was Roman Catholic, her father German Lutheran. They lived in Columbus, Ohio. As my forty-four-year-old grandmother, Kathryn, lay dying of tuberculosis, she had exacted a promise from her husband that nine-year-old Henrietta be raised Catholic. But she also confided in her older daughter (Mother's senior by sixteen years): "The most important thing to me is that Henrietta is brought up to be a good woman." Out of respect for his deceased wife's family and heritage,

my grandfather saw to it that Mother attended mass through her first communion at age twelve. This she did, then promptly announced to the chagrin of her beloved Catholic aunts, uncles, and cousins that she preferred to attend the Lutheran Church with her father. Services were still conducted in German there, however, so she shortly joined her best friend, Frances Brandt, as a member of the King Avenue Methodist Church.

Throughout her life, Mother maintained a deep spirituality anchored on the inspiration she found in Jesus's deeds and teachings. She felt little need to speak about her own beliefs, but she could be moved to tears upon witnessing even the most common act of kindness—as she was when I struck and killed a small pig while she and I were driving down a country road together when I was in high school. I got out of the car and apologized to the farmer who happened to be in his front yard at the time. When I slipped behind the wheel to resume our journey, she smiled through moistened eyes and said: “Thank you for what you just did, Jack.”

A highly educated woman who earned a master's degree at Stanford in 1927, Mother drew enormous strength and courage from her faith in God, from the example and teachings of Jesus, and from good people. When I was a small child, she worshipped at Grace Methodist Church in Dayton, Ohio, with Dad, my two older sisters and me. When I was eight, we moved to neighboring Englewood to be in the country. Mother then attended Concord Methodist near our home in Englewood, and I went with her. I doubt that church attendance ever did much for me or my spiritual development, but Mother's way of embracing the triumphs and tragedies of life surely did. Her deeds revealed her faith and her belief in the essential, if only potential, goodness of the men, women, and children of this world, both near and far. She did not make judgments or reserve her affections for others based on their race, social class, or sexual preference—and our extended family and circle of friends spanned the full range. It simply was not in her makeup to attach significance to such distinctions. I have never met another person who seemed to possess the pure goodness of my mother.

Dad's father, Thomas V. Newell, attended Bonebrake Theological Seminar in Dayton, Ohio, and was ordained a minister in the United Brethren Church (a branch of Methodism) shortly before he turned forty. With a wife and four small sons, he took a pastorate in the same neighborhood where Orville and Wilbur Wright ran their bicycle shop in Dayton. Soon after, my Grandmother Martha was also diagnosed with tuberculo-

sis and the family doctor instructed Tom and Martha to move west where the dry air would ease her breathing and extend her life. They got off the train in Denver in the autumn of 1902. With no Protestant ministry available, Grandpa turned to skills he had mastered as a youth: horse training, carpentry, and farming.

Grandmother died when my father, their third son, was seven. Grandpa reared his four sons alone on a farm near Loveland, and they helped him establish a homestead up Skinner Gulch. As a boy, Dad recalled, his father often mounted his favorite horse on Sunday mornings, stuffed his Bible in the saddlebag, and rode off to one remote ranch community or another to preach as a circuit riding pastor. Throughout their lives, Dad and his brothers chuckled about their youthful fidgeting while Grandpa offered long and earnest prayers of thanksgiving during which their pancakes turned cold. These memories may explain why the blessing on our food when I was growing up was so simple and direct: "We thank thee for this food, dear Lord, that thou did kindly give help us to show our thanks to thee by how we talk and live. Amen."

As a small child, I knew Dad as a respected physician in the Dayton community and a man who showed great respect for religion. He served on the board of directors at Grace Methodist for a term or two, then resigned when the pastoral committee switched from tolerating moderation in the use of alcohol to insisting on abstinence. When we worshipped as a family in these years, I loved to sit next to Dad because he sang the traditional hymns in a way that resonated with my soul. After he enlisted in the U.S. Navy's Medical Air Corp in World War II when I was five, I remember crying through "Onward, Christian Soldiers" as Mother squeezed my little hand and we both thought about Dad in the war-torn South Pacific. By the time I reached my teens, however, Dad rarely attended church with Mother and me. (By then my sisters had gone off to college in Colorado.) The reasons behind this change in Dad were complex, but the fact that he established a long-term relationship with a patient *cum* mistress when I was twelve provides sufficient explanation.

Over the last twenty years of her life, through pain I still cannot fathom, Mother's faith would be tested and her strength demonstrated by her refusal to give up on Dad, or leave him, despite his nightly "hospital rounds" (as everyone outside the immediate family believed them to be) from 9:00 P.M. to 1:00 A.M. Bitterness never overtook Mother. She continued to devote her life unstintingly to the service of those in need, loving

others unconditionally. The cross Mother bore enabled me to know and admire Dad for his many fine qualities, to realize I must forgive him for his tragic flaw just as she did, and to be nurtured by a strong father whose love for me I knew without doubt.

Dad's belief in me was demonstrated unequivocally at the conclusion of my junior year in high school when he gave his blessing (and thus, Mother's) to a scheme my best friend, Bill Anderson, and I dreamed up in the school library one morning shortly after my sixteenth birthday. We worked after school all spring to earn money for a road trip across the West that summer in Bill's 1950 Chevrolet. We accumulated enough cash (just over \$300) to buy gasoline and food for the extended camping trip, and departed early in June on our three-month journey of 9,000 miles. Dad's trust in allowing me this opportunity, and his pride in our successful return, mattered greatly to me at that critical stage of growing up. "You went away a boy and came back a man," he said with satisfaction the day I commenced my senior year.

An earlier event in my life bears mention. When I was six, a physician diagnosed me with Perthes of the left hip—a deterioration of the ball joint and surrounding bone that demands treatment to help avert the permanent shortening of the affected leg. With a straight brace that took all the weight off my left leg and a two-inch thick cork-soled shoe on my right foot, I attended the Gorman School for Crippled Children in Dayton for my second and third grades. The horrible polio epidemic following World War II was in full swing at the time, so all but one of my schoolmates were severely crippled and most faced permanent disabilities. The day the doctor told me to take off my leg brace and cast it aside was one of the most joyous—and sobering—of my formative years. Gorman School and my friends there were soon in my past, but an awareness of my good fortune, and the capriciousness of others' misfortunes, marked me with an enduring sensitivity to the severe trials that people face in life.

Rites of Passage

I left home for Deep Springs College at seventeen, the beneficiary of loving parents, two older sisters whom I worshipped, and a spiritual legacy rich in texture and real in experience. My college years—at Deep Springs, the University of California at Davis, and Ohio State—were filled with animated discussions about religion, politics, and ethics. I returned home for Christmas in my nineteenth year, determined to confront Dad about his

continuing affair with Charlotte Baber—and the awful toll it was taking on Mother. I arranged to meet him at his office after his final appointment one afternoon. Dad knew why I needed to talk with him alone, and he accepted my eye-to-eye appeal to his conscience. At the end of our unsparing conversation, he said: “I am helpless, Jack, and I will not change what I am doing. You must accept me as I am if we are to know each other as men.” I did not tell Mother of this conversation right away, knowing the additional pain it would cause her. But when I later related the story to her, she wept—not from anger about her plight but in gratitude for my futile effort.

Having seen courage, faith, grace, and forgiveness at work in a life so close to mine, I passed through the skepticism of my college years rather quickly. No surprise, then, that Harold Grimm’s senior course sequence at Ohio State on the European Renaissance and Protestant Reformation captured my imagination as no other academic studies had done. The content of these courses and the character of this professor gave direction to my life-long interest in the history of religion, the sources of spirituality, and the varieties of moral and spiritual belief. That year of study with Professor Grimm also focused my sights on becoming a professor. To earn a living teaching as he taught and thinking about the things that animated him looked like a dream to me, and I pursued it passionately.

I received my baccalaureate degree in history from Ohio State in May 1961 and, on the same day, opened an envelope from which fell a handsome check. To my surprise, my recently deceased Uncle Francis had left each of his nieces and nephews a bequest of \$500. The next day I called Rocky Mountain National Park to seek (and receive) a release from my commitment to lead its forest fire-fighting crew that summer. I promptly purchased a round-trip ticket to London and stuffed my backpack with bare essentials. Within a week, I was on my own in a world I had known only from books and pictures. First the British Isles on a Mo-Ped, then the Continent by thumb. My Deep Springs classmate, Rich Haynie, was just concluding the second year of his mission in Paris that summer and I went to visit him at the LDS mission home at 3, rue de Lota.

The first day we were together, Rich led me on a tour of the Louvre, the Arch of Triumph, and the Eiffel Tower. In response to my curiosity about the purpose of his mission, he laid the six missionary lessons on me the next day. Impressed but somewhat overwhelmed, I struck out on my own the following day and Rich returned to his regular routine. Before I left, however, we traded books—my partially read copy of Ayn Rand’s *The*

Fountainhead for Rich's English edition of the Book of Mormon. The latter promptly found its way to the bottom of my backpack where it provided nothing more than ballast throughout my summer adventures that included climbing the Matterhorn with another Deep Springs buddy, Vern Penner. I returned home in September, just in time to commence my studies for a master's degree at Duke University.

I repacked for school in a single day and headed for Durham, North Carolina, stopping overnight to visit my sister Joyce and her husband, Gene, in Blacksburg, Virginia. When I mentioned my time with Rich Haynie, Joyce lit up. She, too, had become interested in Mormonism through a college roommate, and we talked long into the night after Gene went to bed. Mormonism had become a sore point between them. Arriving at Duke the next day, I was just moving into the graduate dorm room when two young men appeared at my door. Elders, from Idaho. Joyce had contacted the mission president in Virginia when I pulled out of her driveway that morning. The efficiency of the LDS Church bureaucracy was revealing itself to me for the first time.

Heady Thoughts and High Ideals

My master's program centered on American history in the Revolutionary era. When Professor Harold Parker handed me a list and asked me what I wished to pick as my minor field, I chose theology. Duke had a fine Protestant divinity school, and it seemed to me that a serious look at things religious was in order. I took a year-long course in Christian eschatology and social thought from Professor Ray C. Petry and enjoyed every day of it. At the same time, my dark-suited Idaho missionary friends were coming by my apartment for regular visits. I occasionally attended the local Methodist Church, sometimes went to the LDS services, but usually hung out with Rick Coville, John Cavanagh, Jim Coward, and other grad school friends on Sunday mornings. Through the LDS ward, I formed a close friendship with Chuck and Valeen Avery. He was pursuing a doctorate in forestry at Duke in the same program my brother-in-law Benny was to join the next year. When Lenette and Benny arrived in Durham in the autumn of 1962, we enjoyed many good times together as struggling graduate students—including many passionate conversations about politics, the environment, and religion. Mormonism quickly became an emotional lightning rod that unleashed thunderous arguments among us. We

somehow learned to enter and leave this stormy field without carrying the fallout across to other facets of our close sibling relationship.

By the early 1960s, when Mormon Church president David O. McKay was pushing ninety, his first counselor Hugh B. Brown had become the leading spokesman for the LDS Church. The eloquent Brown, nearing eighty himself, urged young people to think for themselves and warned everyone about the dangers of blind obedience. He also forged a high level of camaraderie with leaders of other religions in the United States. I read everything of his that I could get my hands on, and he quickly became the most inspiring religious leader I had ever known. One of his statements still rolls off my tongue from memory:

You young people live in an age when freedom of the mind is suppressed over much of the world. We must preserve it in the Church and in America and resist all efforts by earnest men to suppress it. . . . Preserve, then, the freedom of your mind in education and in religion, and be unafraid to express your thoughts and to insist upon your right to examine every proposition. We are not so concerned with whether your thoughts are orthodox or heterodox as we are that you shall have thoughts.²

Seeking understanding and living by the spirit of the law was his constant refrain. This was a religious attitude and philosophy that resonated with my most deeply held beliefs.³

The summer between my first and second years at Duke, I went west for my fourth season of fighting forest fires for the U.S. Forest Service or National Park Service. This time I won the fire crew chief position on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. I wanted to live among Mormons and experience their religion and culture where they were at home. My job got off to a fast start and proved to be both challenging and rewarding. Late one June night as a full moon beamed through the bunkhouse window by my cot, I felt an urge to get up and drive to the canyon overlook, Cape Royal, to contemplate my life. With my legs dangling over the lip of the chasm, silvery with moon-glow, I resolved to join the Mormon Church. I definitely could not accept its claim to be the "one true church," but I did believe that living my life within its culture—the culture that Hugh B. Brown so eloquently championed and my friend Rich Haynie exemplified—would be right for me. If I someday reached the Pearly Gates and Saint Peter broke the news that the Mormons had no corner on the truth, I reasoned, I would smile knowingly and reply that I couldn't have chosen a better way to live.

A week later two of my best friends from high school, Larry Collins and Steve Josselyn, stopped to see me on their western road trip prior to Larry's marriage. The three of us went to the lodge bar that evening and I ordered a Coke. "What! What's happened to you, Tiger?" Steve blurted out. Larry chimed in with equal surprise. We had enjoyed drinking beer together since we graduated from high school in Englewood, Ohio. When I explained that I had decided to join the LDS Church and therefore to forgo alcoholic beverages and coffee, they were baffled but entirely respectful. We clinked our glasses and fully enjoyed the next several days together.

At the end of July, Linda King asked me to be her date for the North Rim employees' mid-summer "Turn-About Dance." After that, I asked her out again and again. A waitress at the North Rim Lodge dining room that summer and a senior majoring in art education at Utah State, she had been reared in an inactive Mormon family in Fillmore, Utah. Actively engaged in the Church herself, however, she seemed to understand me instinctively and was comfortable with my way of seeing the world. We spent almost every evening together through August and early September. When it was time for us to resume our studies, I drove Linda to Fillmore and met her family, then delivered her to Utah State in Logan before I headed back to North Carolina. Linda and I had, however, stopped in Richfield, Utah, for an important event. Rich Haynie had returned from the French Mission, and he agreed to baptize me in his home ward before I left the state. Linda was with me for that event on September 9. It has always meant a great deal to both of us that I had decided to join the LDS Church prior to our first date. The choice had been mine alone; it was not affected by the romance that kindled shortly after my moonlit epiphany.

Shock Waves Hit My Family . . . and Me

News of my conversion to Mormonism sent shock waves through the Newell family. Mother was in Oregon helping Lenette and Benny with their four children when my letter arrived describing my imminent baptism as a Mormon. She immediately interpreted my decision as a failure of her spiritual nurturance, a feeling no doubt intensified by Lenette and Benny's belief that Mormonism, despite its many wholesome adherents, was a cult founded by a mentally ill crackpot. Dad happened to be visiting Joyce and her family that same weekend when my letter arrived in Virginia. She, of course, was elated, while Gene shrugged in disgust. Dad said

nothing. When Joyce asked what he thought about my baptism, he retorted: "Well, at least he didn't join up with the damn Catholics!" (Dad's equanimity, you see, did not rival Mother's.) These strong reactions notwithstanding, I believe my decision was a tribute to my upbringing. It never occurred to me to consider how the family would react. I had always been encouraged to think for myself and prepared to make decisions about my life with confidence. I believed instinctively that the family would respect my choice, but comfortable acceptance did not come easily or quickly.

Linda and I corresponded throughout the 1962–63 academic year. She came to Ohio to spend Christmas with me and my family, and I drove to Logan to give her an engagement ring during spring vacation. At Mother's insistence, the ring was set with the diamond that her father had given her when she graduated from high school. I was ordained an elder in Durham on March 10, just six months after my baptism, in preparation for our temple marriage in June—which required approval by the First Presidency of the Church since I did not meet the minimum one-year membership requirement for entering the temple. My letter of authorization bore the shaky signature of President David O. McKay.

Linda and I were married "civilly" in Fillmore on Saturday, June 15, so that members of both our families could be with us. By this time, Linda's mother was so debilitated by alcohol addiction that she was unable to help with wedding preparations. Linda, therefore, planned and orchestrated our wedding and reception herself. My parents drove out from Ohio and other members of my extended family drove in from California and the Midwest, and two Deep Springs classmates traveled to Fillmore for the occasion. This considerable gathering from my side of the marriage notwithstanding, our simple ceremony at Linda's ward house was held in the tiny Relief Society room because the Church refused to dignify marriages outside the temple by allowing them to take place in the church's chapels. The fact that our wedding would not be considered a marriage by the Church was so offensive by my sister Lenette and my two brothers-in-law that my siblings and their families did not make the trip.

We planned to drive directly to Logan the following day to be ready for Linda's summer school classes at Utah State on Monday. Sunday began very early, however, when we were awakened at the Safari Motel in Nephi by a state trooper who instructed us to return to Fillmore immediately. We were living outside the law, he informed us soberly, because we

had not signed our marriage license! It turned out that the trooper was a personal friend of Linda's father, and they had conspired to make the most of this opportunity to haze the newlyweds. After signing the official document with a flourish and enjoying a memorable lunch at Linda's home with our parents and other family members, we set out again for Logan.

Two days later Linda and I entered the Logan Temple to seal our marriage in the customary LDS manner "for time and all eternity." At that time, Mormon couples went through their religious endowment ceremonies and temple marriages in one continuous process. I was completely unprepared for what hit me. Stunned. The pressure to make lifelong promises of obedience to Church leaders and to wear authorized garments day and night for the rest of my life came with no reasonable chance to ask why, object, or opt out. To do so would have been to call off the marriage and incur humiliation, especially for Linda who had been reared in the culture. I felt entrapped by the Church especially because, at this point in the process, the bride and groom are separated from each other.

Fortunately, my trusted friend Rich Haynie went through this endowment ceremony with me. Without him, I may very well have stood up and walked out. Linda's bishop, Elliot Rich, who was a professor of agriculture at Utah State, also proved to be a most engaging and understanding friend in the days that followed. I tried to hang on to Hugh Brown's interpretation of Church doctrines, but the garments (those old one-piece button-bottom marvels) chafed me in both body and spirit. Bishop Rich kept me in the fold when he answered my direct question: "Are we supposed to wear these garments *all* the time, as the elderly gentleman instructed me when I entered the temple?" His response: "I believe there are times when your temple garments can be folded neatly and placed at the foot of your bed. Now, if you don't want a different answer, don't ask anyone else." We weren't about to.

Early Years of Marriage and Mormon Life

My spiritual road was both rough and rewarding over the next couple of years as I finished my master's at Duke and taught a year at Clemson University in South Carolina. The rewards came chiefly from our association with the humble members of the tiny Seneca branch in the mountains west of Clemson—and especially the branch president Tom Garner,

his wife Trudy, and their six young children. The roughness was due in large part to Joseph Fielding Smith's sermons assailing evolution and insisting that the world is only six thousand years old. I wrote him (he was then president of the Quorum of the Twelve) and asked if he believed it was necessary to accept his view to be a faithful Latter-day Saint. He scribbled across the bottom of my letter "See my *Man, His Origin and Destiny*," and mailed it back to me. Having read the book, I knew what it said, and I felt empty over this exchange. But David O. McKay, I learned years later, didn't support Smith on this position and trimmed Smith's sails by having University of Utah geologist Lee Stokes write an article for the old Church magazine, the *Improvement Era*, defending geological time. I read it with surprise and satisfaction. A decade later when I joined the University of Utah faculty, I met Stokes and thanked him. We remained friends until he died.

Linda and I spent two months at my extended family's simple cabin on a tiny island in Georgian Bay, Ontario, between my year of teaching at Clemson and starting my two-year faculty stint at Deep Springs College. I had been a Barry Goldwater conservative until then, but I was reconsidering my political philosophy. Linda and I decided to read Samuel Elliot Morrison's new *Oxford History of the American People*—all 1,100 pages of it—aloud to each other. Finishing the task before we headed west, I discovered that the ideals that had always mattered most to me—social justice, human rights, and mercy (giving people a second chance)—were more often championed by the left than the right. I registered as a Democrat that fall, as did Linda. Once again I encountered the stunned disbelief of my physician father and that of my sisters and their husbands. Mother, on the other hand, responded with interest, being genuinely curious about our shifting political views.

Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought was founded in 1966, heralded by an article in *Time* magazine. Linda and I read about it one morning at breakfast and sent our check for a subscription to the independent journal before the day was out. What a breath of fresh air it was to know that other unorthodox people like us found ways to be happy and productive in the fold! I was teaching at Deep Springs at the time, and Linda and I also found the Bishop Branch of the Church—fifty miles away in the Owens Valley—a welcome spiritual home. We attended its services regularly in the old Elks Hall, and served in the Young Men's and Young Women's leadership, making two trips a week over and back across some-

times treacherous Westgard Pass. The upbeat members of our struggling branch were a welcome respite from the anger, pessimism, and cynicism of the Deep Springs students and faculty during the Vietnam War. Our own mounting anger boiled over in June 1970 when one of the Deep Springs students we had been closest to was killed in action.

New Hampshire: Conflicts and Rewards

In the autumn of 1967, we moved from Deep Springs to Durham, New Hampshire. I had taken a job as assistant dean of liberal arts, hired by Gene Mills who was to become our lifelong friend. Our paths also converged again with Lenette and Benny's, for he had recently joined the forestry faculty at the University of New Hampshire. We enjoyed three remarkable years together in New England.

When we arrived in the Granite State, I was still smarting over increasingly restrictive Church policies that signalled the end of the era of President McKay and Hugh B. Brown. Joseph Fielding Smith loomed as the next president of the Church, and he was finally having things his way. I had decided that I would simply drift away when Boyd K. Packer, then an assistant to the Twelve and the new president of the New England States Mission, came to the Portsmouth meetinghouse one Sunday to interview a string of Melchizedek Priesthood holders for the purpose of reorganizing the New Hampshire District leadership. When it came my turn, he didn't ask me if I believed the doctrines of the Church or supported the General Authorities; he simply called me to serve as one of the twelve members of the district council. I said, "All right," and that was that. Three of my best friends, Ernie Ellsworth, Glendon Gee, and Dick Lemke, also in their late twenties, were appointed to the council. No one on it, including the president and his counselors, had passed their early forties. Packer himself was only forty-three. This was the mission field at its best.

Several things stood out in my Church experience during these New Hampshire years. I discovered immediately that the district president was a John Birch Society officer, as right-wing as they come. George Romney was bidding for a presidential run in the New Hampshire primary that spring, and our district president wore a "George Wallace for President" (the segregationist ex-governor of Alabama) lapel pin to our monthly district council meetings. When my friends and I turned up at the next meeting with our "Romney for President" pins, an earnest discussion ensued.

The upshot: We would all leave our politics outside when we engaged in Church business, concentrating instead on what united us. We did, too, and we generated a high level of esprit.

George Romney was a moderate Republican with an impressive reform record as governor of Michigan. We used our 150-year-old Bow Lake farmhouse as a “neighborhood headquarters” and held a reception there for his wife, Lenore Romney, a gracious woman. The Vietnam War had become a national agony by that spring; and George Romney’s candidacy came crashing down when, at a press conference in Concord, he flatly stated that he had been “brainwashed” by the Johnson administration during a recent visit to Saigon. The press ridiculed him for this single sentence, and he was forced out of the running before the primary was held. Of course, as time passed, it became clear that he and most other Americans had, indeed, been brainwashed for a long time, but that clarity didn’t save George Romney’s candidacy. Along with a number of Church friends, we backed Hubert Humphrey enthusiastically that fall in the general election, but he suffered a narrow loss to Richard Nixon.

As an LDS district councilman, I became something of a circuit-riding preacher myself, akin to Grandfather T. V. Newell six decades earlier. The last Sunday of each month, Linda and I traveled to a different struggling branch in the Granite State to attend a string of Sunday meetings and speak at sacrament services. We drove our blue 1968 VW beetle which I shod with studded snow tires each winter, enabling us to set off for some remarkable adventures with our daughters Chris and Jennifer. We often stayed overnight with branch presidents and their families, forming friendships with many young families akin to our own.

I was speaking in the un-air-conditioned Concord chapel one sweltering Sunday afternoon when a six-month-old baby began to cry. I put up with the competition as long as I could, then paused in frustration and said what every Mormon speaker has secretly wished to blurt out: “Would the lady down in front please remove her screaming baby from this meeting!” Those in attendance were aghast for a split second—until they realized that Jennifer and Linda were the culprits—and that I was smiling.

A crucial element of my Church life in New Hampshire was a meeting I requested with Elder Packer at the New England Mission home in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I had corresponded with him through several cycles about the Church’s stand against the ordination of worthy African Americans to the priesthood. When I drove down Interstate 95 to talk

with Packer, he was all business. He had no patience with my questions, told me to repent for my lack of faith in Church leaders, and warned me to stop questioning and get myself back in line with Church doctrine. This was particularly ironic, because one of my points had been that the proscription on Blacks receiving the priesthood was a long-time *practice* of the Church, not a doctrine traceable to a claimed revelation. Elder Packer and I parted with a chilly handshake. Shortly thereafter, he left the mission presidency and returned to Church headquarters where he was soon to serve as one of the Twelve. Charismatic Paul H. Dunn, ordained to the First Council of the Seventy in 1964, swept in to replace Packer as mission president.

No two leaders could have been more different in style or approach. Dunn, a protégé of Hugh Brown, spoke forthrightly about the free agency of members and poked fun at the deferential treatment General Authorities typically expect. Linda and I both enjoyed a most cordial relationship with him, and our friendship would be renewed again and again. Suffice it to say, Paul Dunn was a General Authority I admired and enjoyed as a friend. Years later in Salt Lake City, he spoke to an area-wide priesthood leadership gathering that I attended. He admonished us against “the common practice of using force, and pressure, and guilt as instruments to keep members in an obedient frame of mind.” Such tools, he warned, were unworthy of a free and believing people. He gave this remarkable address shortly before he was marginalized for exaggerating or fabricating his World War II and major league baseball stories. His speaking and story-telling styles were exciting, invariably humorous, and deeply humane—akin to Garrison Keillor’s—but Elder Dunn neglected to tell his listeners that his Lake Wobegon was not real either. This lapse in judgment severely diminished this enormously popular, effective, and youth-oriented Church leader. Ironically, it was an article in *Sunstone* magazine that revealed Dunn’s deceptions to a Mormon audience after the *Arizona Republic* broke the story—testimony to the power and impartiality of a free press and to free inquiry in the Church. He was one of just two remaining General Authorities who actively supported *Dialogue* and *Sunstone* within the Church community.

Ohio: Religious and Family Transitions

We moved to Columbus, Ohio, in August 1970, in pursuit of my doctorate at Ohio State. Roald Campbell became my dissertation com-

mittee chair and, ultimately, a close colleague, co-author, and friend. These years between 1970 and 1974 were especially important ones in our family. Living just seventy miles from my parents in Dayton afforded many chances to get together. Mother sought every opportunity to spend time with Chris and Jennifer, and Dad took great pleasure in our times together as well. One weekend Mother and Dad attended church with us at our ward. Around our dining room table that afternoon, they suddenly became very serious, and Mother said: "Daddy and I want you to know that we admire the way you live your religion, and we respect the place of the Mormon Church in your lives. Your children are fortunate to be raised as you are leading them. This makes us very happy." Mother died without warning of heart failure following gall bladder surgery a few months later. Our son, Eric, was born less than a year later, a juxtaposition that led us to wonder playfully if Mother had gone up there and picked him out for us.

Exactly one year after Mother's death, Dad announced his plan to marry Charlotte Baber. Struck by the cruel irony of her succeeding Mother in our family home, we were quite unprepared to respond to this news. Aunt Louise, then in her early nineties, sensed our dilemma and counseled Linda and me: "If you refuse all contact with Charlotte, you will cut yourselves and your children off from your father. You must decide now which is more important to you, avoiding Charlotte or having Len in your lives and the lives of your children." We opted for Dad. In the years that followed, his gratitude—and his presence in our lives and our children's growing-up years—was our rich reward.

Dad and Charlotte had several years together before she fell victim to severe dementia that required institutionalization. She died while Dad was flying to Salt Lake City for one of his semi-annual visits with us in the late 1980s. I broke the news to him as he got off the airplane, then flew back to Ohio with him the next day to help with the funeral. Charlotte had just one surviving relative, a nephew who flew commercial jets. He attended the funeral along with five of Dad's elderly friends. In driving snow and bitter cold that late November day, the nephew, two funeral directors, and I carried Charlotte to her grave. Dad hobbled along beside me with his cane, wordlessly, though three decades of pathos clogged both his mind and my own.

As for our church life in Columbus, I was called almost immediately to serve on the stake high council and was ordained a high priest. The

stake president, Jack Van Rye, was a young pharmaceutical salesman from Utah with apparent aspirations for higher leadership in the Church. Happily, Stayner Brighton, Ohio's superintendent of public instruction, and John Jefferies, director of the Columbus Children's Hospital, also served on that high council. The three of us constituted an unusual liberal wing of the body. They were both older and more experienced than the stake president (and certainly me), which made it difficult for him to dismiss our trio. During my tenure on the council, at least two Church courts were convened to judge members accused of heresy or infidelity. The president may have been a by-the-book judge, but he had trouble with his jury. Stayner, John, and I stood up for both defendants, arguing for measures more lenient than excommunication. Kindness, we urged, would be more likely to inspire genuine contrition than ecclesiastical judgment. It would also spare their families severe and unnecessary consequences of their own. Since these courts are supposed to render unanimous decisions, led by the stake president, our contrasting views caused Van Rye much consternation—but apparently spared the errant members excommunication.

Rich Haynie came to seek his doctorate at Ohio State in 1973, while I was serving a post-doctoral fellowship there. He and Becky also had three young children, so our old friendship blossomed with added dimensions. Rich served in a stake music calling. At one priesthood leadership meeting, the stake president's remarks could be characterized as "going the Church one better." If Church policy required Aaronic Priesthood youth to wear white shirts and dark slacks to administer the sacrament, then, in our stake, he stated, these young men would also wear ties and trim their hair so it did not touch their collars or ears. When it came time to conclude the meeting with a hymn, Rich, who was at the piano, stood and announced, "Rather than close the meeting tonight with 'Come, Come, Ye Saints,' we will sing 'Know This, That Every Soul Is Free.'" Many of us sang with renewed fervor that night as Rich pounded on the keyboard.

Memorable as these experiences were, our Church life in Columbus was no match for the excitement and romance of the newly established missions and less "Church-broke" members we had known in upper New England, rural South Carolina, and eastern California.

Rearing Children in Zion

If our four years in Ohio had jolted our LDS frame of reference,

then our move to Utah was a sea change. The University of Utah hired me to preside over its Student Affairs Division and offered me an assistant professorship effective July 1, 1974. Linda and I had always panned Mormons who longed to “go home to Zion,” so we dealt with the irony of our move to Utah by regarding it as a three-year sojourn. For those first three years, we lived in Holladay, across the street from the meetinghouse. (In New Hampshire, we had lived twenty-seven miles from the church, and in Ohio the distance was roughly three miles.) Our neighborhood was about 95 percent Mormon, genuinely admirable people for the most part. I taught the adult Sunday School class for a time, helped a bit with the youth, and covered for four-year-old Eric and his five-year old compatriot when they broke three windows out of the Church basement one summer morning while “pretending to be robbers.” No wonder a woman came up to me after church later that year and exclaimed: “I just figured out why you look so familiar to me! You play the part of the devil in the temple ceremony, don’t you?” I suppose that’s what you get if you wear a red beard (as mine then was) and rear a pre-kindergarten delinquent in Utah.

Chris and Jennifer were nine and seven years old the second year we lived at 2416 Capricorn Way. I often tucked them into bed, then lay down on top of the bedspread between them to tell a true or made-up “bed-night story.” I often fell asleep before they did, petering out in the middle of a sentence. They would poke me in the ribs, demanding that I wake up and finish the story. One Saturday night, however, they had a serious question to ask me. Jennifer said plaintively, “Last week our Sunday School teacher said she expects every child in her class to bear testimony tomorrow that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God and that the Church is true.” (Fast and testimony meeting was the next morning.) “But I don’t know those things for sure.”

Chris chimed in: “Same for me, but my teacher says she will be terribly disappointed if we don’t bear our testimonies.” A long and surprisingly grown-up discussion followed, at the end of which I offered my fatherly advice: “You should never ever say something you don’t believe, no matter what anyone else says. If you believe Joseph was a prophet, then say so. If you don’t believe he was, then it would be wrong for you to say it. It is always more important to be true to your own conscience than to please someone else.” Chris and Jennifer both went to the microphone the next day to express gratitude for the many good things in their lives, but neither

claimed she believed Joseph Smith was a prophet or that "the Church was true." I admired their youthful courage.

In June 1977, we moved to 1218 Harvard Avenue and became members of the Garden Park II Ward with its beautiful and unique old chapel, spacious grounds, duck pond, and Red Butte Creek. Shortly after we moved, Dick Fox, the bishop, asked if I could visit with him for a few moments. As we sat down in his office, he said, "I want you to teach an alternative adult Sunday School class. The current class is full of older members; and though their teacher is good, he has bored the young couples to the point that they don't come out any more. A lot of these couples are your age, so I'm calling on you to teach a class that will draw them to church on Sunday and give them something to think about all week. I don't care if you use the Church manuals or not, but I trust you'll do something interesting and inspiring."

I accepted Dick's challenge and the newly born class met in the old Carriage House on the grounds next to the chapel. We started with two or three couples and a single adult or two and grew from there. In a short while, Dick wisely asked Linda to join me in teaching the course, and the two of us built it up to a regular attendance of about thirty or thirty-five people. We rarely gave even a mini-lecture, but instead posed real questions, suggested pertinent religious principles and philosophical ideas (drawing especially on the New Testament and Obert Tanner's newly republished *Christ's Ideals for Living*), and got everyone involved. We dealt frankly with issues we all face in work, marriage, parenting, tithe paying, personal conscience, and religious obedience. We always tried to end on a note of practical value, finding things we could do and reason for hope in the wisdom arising from the discussion.

Henry Eyring, the acclaimed University of Utah chemist, came to the class several times as a stake high councilor. He always participated in and seemed to enjoy the discussions. Linda and I taught this class for nearly ten years, forming many fast friendships. The only serious discord we encountered came between the two of us one Sunday morning when I suggested that Muhammad Ali (who was still in his heyday) was the person in our time most like Joseph Smith. I still stand my ground: The two shared a buoyant genius in dealing with people, a daring outlook on life, and an impish sense of humor. And each of them took audaciously controversial stands on issues of his day.

In the meantime, we were both tapped to work in other ward jobs as

well. Linda typically served in the Relief Society, and I taught the young men in priesthood quorums and often in Scouting. Pediatrician Ted Evans and I always seemed to hold related positions in the youth programs, and we organized outings for both young women and young men. As our own children moved up through their school years, I was able to take advantage of my youth leadership callings to do a lot of things with them and to see that they and their peers got many opportunities to enjoy the out-of-doors and engage in community service. Contrary to usual Church practice, I tried to involve the young women in the same activities as the young men.

Sunday dinners around our family table became the focal point of our lives together. Our four children spanned from elementary school to high school and always had a host of questions about what they had been taught in Sunday School or why the speakers had said what they did in sacrament meeting. Would their dear Grandmother Newell really be denied a place in the celestial kingdom because she was not a Latter-day Saint? Were face cards and people who played card games (as they did with their grandfather) really evil? Why can't young women pass the sacrament right along with young men? Why didn't our neighbor, Elder Sterling Sill, ever smile if he was a General Authority of the Church and knew the gospel so well? Smoking is harmful, and alcohol can be very destructive (their Uncle Steve made this fact unmistakably clear), but what was wrong with drinking tea or coffee? The questions poured out and our conversations rolled. How do you distinguish between Church doctrine and what happens to be the opinion of a general conference speaker? What is clearly good about the Church's teachings, and what is probably incidental at best to a good life? Where does the Church's authority end and your conscience begin? No question was off limits, many stories were told, and we laughed as often as we sighed. The Church provided a superb context for our children to think about what is right and wrong, who gets to decide, and how to live a good life and help create a just society. Sunday dinners were often the most exciting and thought-provoking point in our week.

The denial of LDS priesthood ordination to worthy black members was naturally among the issues that came up around our table. President Spencer W. Kimball's announcement in June 1978 that this proscription of privileges was lifted came as a great surprise and enormous relief to our family. I was teaching in England that semester, and we had just joined friends for dinner when one of our hosts mentioned that he had just read

in the *London Times* “about a new proclamation that brings an end to Mormon discrimination against African American men.” Tears sprang to Linda’s eyes, and I choked up, baffling our hosts until they realized that joy was the source of our emotions. With courage and integrity, our friend Lowell Bennion had guided us and thousands of other Latter-day Saints through the excruciating years leading up to this historic change. We are all in his debt for the sacrifices he made to advance this cause.

Serving and Challenging the Establishment

Despite the rewards of our long Church engagement, by the end of the 1970s I could no longer deny the tightening pinch between my conscience and the Church’s increasingly sharp emphasis on obedience. Writing essays to focus my thinking and express myself on matters of importance to me was just becoming my *modus operandi*, so I began burning the midnight oil to work things out in my mind. At a time when I was coming up for promotion to the rank of professor and had only recently been freed from one of the two deanships I had held simultaneously (student affairs, which I dropped, and liberal education), it is clear to me in retrospect that facing my differences with Church leaders commanded my attention with new urgency. In 1980, *Sunstone* published my essay “Mormon Prophets and Modern Problems”⁴ and *Dialogue* published “Personal Conscience and Priesthood Authority.”⁵ In working out my own views, I had become engaged in a serious public conversation to which I would contribute for many years. (It seems that I still am.)

In 1981, the bishopric in our ward was reorganized and I was called to serve as the second counselor to Howard Herbert, a good but rather reserved man in his mid-fifties. Ben Hathaway, who had previously served as a bishop, was first counselor. My reputation as a liberal and the common sense of the ward membership made the announcement of my calling a surprise in sacrament service on Sunday, June 14, judging by the murmur that rippled across the chapel. After the meeting, many people in our Sunday School class seemed to be as pleased as they were startled that someone like me could be called to the bishopric.

When the stake president, Eugene V. Hansen, had interviewed me in his office a few days earlier, he asked me a series of direct questions:

Q.: Are you a regular tithe-payer?

A.: Yes, we tithe but the money does not all go to the Church.

Q.: If you were to serve in the bishopric, would you pay it fully to the Church?

A.: Yes, I would not want to be in the position, even by implication, of urging others to tithe to the Church unless I were doing so myself.

Q.: Do you attend the temple regularly?

A.: No, the experience generally detracts from my spiritual life, but [anticipating him this time] I would do so if I accepted a position of leadership.

Q.: Do you support the every-member-a-missionary program of the Church?

A.: No, for two reasons. First, it implies that friendships are a means to other ends, not ends to be treasured for their own sake. Second, it thrusts an awkward slant on friendships—implying to the other person that what I believe is superior to what he or she believes. My experience does not support this conclusion consistently, and I don't like to insult other people even if I think they are wrong.

Q.: But would you support the missionary program as a bishopric member?

A.: If I have a gift along this line, it is in helping liberal and estranged members stay in the Church. I surely can commit to work actively toward this end, by whatever name you give it.

Q.: All right, then, are you willing to serve with Howard Herbert as his second counselor?

A.: If you are comfortable with me as I am, then I am comfortable in saying yes.

“Good,” President Hansen responded. “We will present your name for a sustaining vote at church tomorrow morning, and set you apart immediately thereafter.”

As I rose to leave, he exclaimed, “Oh, one more thing. Would accepting this calling jeopardize in any way your effectiveness in bridging the Mormon/non-Mormon communities within the University of Utah?”

“Five years ago,” I said, “it might have pigeon-holed me, but faculty and students know me well enough now that I doubt anyone on either side of the religious divide would see me as less trustworthy.”

President Hansen nodded with satisfaction and ushered me out. Also of interest in this conversation was the fact that I had worn a full beard since before coming to the university. Gene Hansen said nothing

about my whiskers, nor did anyone else outside a few close friends who wanted to know if President Hansen had brought the matter up.

The new bishopric was sustained and set apart that Sunday, and we embraced our responsibilities. Both of my senior compatriots apparently felt a need to school me in the ways of Church leadership. While Howard's initiatives were subtle, Ben assumed the role of an assertive older brother and occasionally lectured me sternly about "supporting the brethren" when I questioned the wisdom of instructions passed down from Church headquarters. Two months into our working relationship, such an episode flared up over the home referral missionary program through which every active couple was asked to invite three non-member neighbors over for dinner (as couples or singles) along with two full-time missionaries. Bishopric members, as usual, were to lead by example. When Howard presented the challenge and called on Ben and me to get started right away, I said as graciously as I could that Linda and I would not be participating. Ben raised his voice in protest, I raised mine in response, and our tempers flared. As we went at it, Howard sat frozen behind his desk pleading, "Brethren. Brethren! Stop, oh please, stop!" Ben and I continued until we both were thoroughly vented. When we caught our breaths, we looked at each other and burst out laughing, then stood up and gave each other a bear hug. We both admired the spunk we saw in the other far more than we cared about our differences. From that day forward, Ben and I worked together with remarkable esprit.

My three-plus years in the bishopric were eventful and satisfying. I came to understand more fully that every household in our neighborhood (indeed, any neighborhood) bore its own grief and, in most cases, tapped the wellsprings of its own strengths and achieved its own triumphs. I counseled newly married couples as Elliot Rich had counseled Linda and me, and seized more than my share of openings for good-natured change. When ward conference rolled around one year, for example, it fell to me to read the names of all ward leaders and call for the customary sustaining vote by the membership. The Church provided a template on which every leadership position is named, followed by a blank in which the appropriate person's name was to be written in. Looking this over the night before the meeting, I noticed that there were spaces for the names of all the young men who led Aaronic Priesthood quorums but nothing comparable for the young women who led their classes. Easy to remedy. I simply made a parallel list next to the boys' names, and added all the girls who

were leaders of their Young Women's classes. When I read the names of ward leaders, from the bishop on down, I proceeded right through my expanded form, called for a sustaining show of hands for the named individuals, and, having completed my assigned task, sat down. Someone tapped my knee. It was the stake president passing a hand-written note my way: "Is there a new form for sustaining ward leaders?" I scribbled in reply, "Yes, there is in our ward!" and handed it back. He smiled knowingly.

The Promise and Price of Free Expression

As a senior dean on the campus now and a recently promoted full professor, I found my career to be in a highly demanding but stable phase. Complicating matters, however, Linda and I were presented an additional challenge less than a year into my bishopric duties. Dick and Julie Cummings invited us to their home one evening. Over dinner, Dick explained that they were working with the search committee to find new editors for *Dialogue* and asked if we would consider taking on that challenge. We were honored by the confidence the search committee showed in us but explained that we already had our hands full.

A week or two later, Fred Esplin and Randy Mackey came to our home on a Sunday afternoon. We hardly knew either man, so their telephone call to set up the meeting aroused our curiosity. After a lively conversation in our living room, they explained that the *Dialogue* search committee had chosen us. They caught us by complete surprise. Linda's recent articles about Emma Smith (even though *Mormon Enigma* was still three years from publication) and my recently published essays in *Dialogue* and *Sunstone* apparently brought us to their attention. Suffice it to say, we were flattered by their confidence and asked if we could ponder the matter for a few days. In the end, we agreed to tackle the editorship if several conditions were met. Would Lavina Fielding Anderson join us as associate editor? Would Fred and Randy serve, respectively, as the journal's business manager and legal counsel? Would Allen Roberts lend his extensive periodical publishing experience to the mix? All agreed. This group became the core of our *Dialogue* leadership team for the next five-plus years. Linda staffed the office downtown with able assistants, I devoted evenings and weekends to the task, and the two of us took turns chairing the weekly policy and editorial meetings in our living room.

Stanford University graduate students Gene England and Wesley Johnson had founded and run the journal in Palo Alto, California. In the

early 1970s they handed the responsibility to Bob Rees in Los Angeles, who passed it to Mary Bradford and Lester Bush in Washington, D.C., where it remained until 1982. When we moved the *Dialogue* editorial office to Utah for the first time in its sixteen-year history, hand-wringing broke out among some of the journal's most ardent supporters. Wouldn't Church leaders be able to intimidate the editors if they were in the same city? Others, however, saw *Dialogue's* arrival in Utah as a sign that the independent journal had matured and could stand its ground. As it turned out, our five years at the helm were tumultuous for LDS scholars and writers everywhere because the Church made a series of moves to intimidate independent scholarship about the Mormon experience and discourage Church members from reading *Dialogue* and *Sunstone* or attending scholarly symposia sponsored by them.

About a year into our editorship, over a dozen of our writers, personal friends, and acquaintances were called on the carpet by their stake presidents and warned, variously, to stop their research into controversial facets of Church history and to stop publishing in *Dialogue*, *Sunstone*, and the *Seventh East Press* (a short-lived, independent student newspaper at BYU that was closed down after its editors published an interview with Sterling McMurrin). If they continued to write, they were instructed, they should shift their focus to faith-promoting stories. Historians were threatened with sanctions including excommunication if they published studies that dealt with such subjects as Church finances, Church leadership, polygamy, or the evolution of temple ordinances. Our Tuesday evening *Dialogue* editorial team meetings suddenly became electric as reports of each new development in this confrontation between scholars and Church authorities played out. As the lines of conflict became etched with increasing clarity, our editorial team unitedly resolved to remain focused on publishing legitimate scholarship and principled in defending the integrity of the journal and our authors.

Two manuscripts and their authors truly punctuated this high-stakes conflict. The first was an exhaustive study by David John Buerger of the secretly practiced "second anointings" through which select Mormon leaders have been chosen and promised in a most sacred temple ceremony that a lofty place in heaven is assured for them, no matter what they might subsequently do. (Though Buerger did not explore the doctrinal implications, concentrating instead on its history, I find them truly disturbing.) The other manuscript, written by former BYU his-

torian D. Michael Quinn, documented and considered the implications of the continued authorization of new polygamous marriages after the formal renunciation of plural marriage in 1890. (Perhaps half a dozen of the marriages involved General Authorities as a party; many of the new plural marriages they authorized, however, were lower-ranking members. This practice continued for at least fourteen years following President Wilford Woodruff's Manifesto that federal officials and the general public were led to believe ended polygamy.) In these and related cases, our tests for publishing became: (1) Is the evidence unimpeachable? (2) Is the interpretation responsible? and (3) Is the issue important to a rounded understanding of the Mormon experience? The Quinn and Buerger manuscripts both passed muster after exhaustive review and refinement, and we published them.

When the former was under review by us, which somehow was no secret to Church authorities, Apostle Boyd K. Packer went so far as to threaten us and the authors in only slightly veiled fashion at the priesthood session of general conference: "Anyone who interrupts the process of faith, or the seeds of trust in Church leaders . . . *just go ahead!* These shall be *cut off.*" I was present when these words were spoken, understood them well, and wrote them in my notebook. I resolved then and there not to bow to Packer's threat. After a very long and traumatic discussion in our living room a few nights later, the rest of our *Dialogue* leadership group arrived at the same difficult conclusion. If verifiable historical evidence, carefully vetted and responsibly interpreted, challenged the faith or undermined the authority of Church leaders, then both the membership and the leadership needed to be mature enough to deal knowledgeably and openly with our whole history. That was, and is, my position.

Paralleling these events, Doubleday released Linda's and Valeen Avery's thoroughly researched biography of Joseph Smith's first wife, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith*, in October 1984. The volume won three significant book awards the first year, but Church leaders were rankled, most obviously because Linda and Val dealt frankly with the origins and early practice of polygamy—clearly the major trial in Emma's life. Both authors received many invitations to speak at sacrament services, Relief Society meetings, and evening firesides. The first-time public discussion of the topic upset Church leaders.

In the introduction to the second edition of the book, published by the University of Illinois Press in 1994, Linda and Val captured the long

and sad story of the Church's clandestine effort to quash sales of the book and ban them from speaking about it on Church property or to Church groups. Suffice it to say here, in June 1985, a confidential message transmitted only in person or by phone went out to LDS ward and stake leaders in Utah, Arizona, and Idaho, warning them about the book and instructing them to deny any and all invitations that might be tendered Linda or Val to speak in meetinghouses—including sacrament services, Relief Society meetings, and firesides. We received no fewer than seven phone calls that Sunday morning from friends who served in ward or stake leadership positions, asking if Linda and Val had been told about the proscription on their freedom to speak within the Church. They had not. Serious issues about the propriety of the action, due process, and personal respect immediately leaped to the fore.

In the weeks that followed, Linda, through our stake president, Eugene Hansen, insisted on a meeting with someone of apostolic rank to hear an explanation for the directive, the rationale for it, and the reason that the order was disseminated without her knowledge or Val's. Linda and I ultimately met with two apostles, Neal Maxwell and Dallin Oaks, both of whom we knew from their days as ordinary members. Maxwell had served as vice-president of the University of Utah and Oaks had been president of Brigham Young University. We invited President Hansen to accompany us, which he did. Ushered into Oaks's office, we found them both cordial if ill at ease; but as our conversation unfolded, neither proved to be at all forthcoming. When Linda asked if they had read *Mormon Enigma*, Maxwell said nothing and Oaks commented that he had "read parts of it." Even so, they did not apologize for the action taken by the Church nor try to explain it. They said only that the behind-the-scenes manner in which ward and stake leaders were instructed to act on the decision might not have been the best way to do it.

As relatively new apostles, and the only two who had come up through academic careers, I believe Elders Maxwell and Oaks in particular were assigned to talk with us as a way of testing their absolute loyalty to the Church's hierarchy. In meeting with us, they were clearly required to speak against free inquiry, defending the Church's views and actions on this matter as their own rite of passage. Linda and I left the meeting on a polite note, but one that lacked warmth on either side. We rode down the elevator of the old Church Administration Building at 47 East South Temple, remarking on the contrast between the ideals that inspired us

and the loyalties that bound the two Church apostles. Nothing had changed.

Linda and Val were shortly the center of national news stories. Someone had tipped off religion writer John Dart at the *Los Angeles Times*. He promptly interviewed them both and tried to get an explanation from the Church (without success). The story ran in leading newspapers from coast to coast. The controversy over the Church's "book banning" raged for months. In the midst of this turmoil, Linda's phone rang one day at the *Dialogue* office. A familiar voice from our past said: "This is Paul Dunn, Linda. Do you remember me?" Of course she did; and in their cordial conversation, he invited Linda, me, and our children to come down to his office later that week just to talk. "You know, Linda," he said, "how much I admire you and your work, and I know your children love you for who you are, but I want them to know that I know how good your book is and how courageous a person you are."

Welcome Respite

Heather and Eric were still rather young, but on the appointed afternoon Chris came down from Utah State and we picked Jennifer up early at East High. The four of us spent more than an hour with Paul Dunn in his office, speaking frankly, reminiscing, and laughing together. "I can tell you that none of your critics up here have read your book, Linda," he said, "but I have read every word of it—including the footnotes—and I can tell you it is an excellent biography." He showed great interest in Chris and Jennifer, asking questions about their studies and plans.

When we left Dunn's office and walked down the hall, Marion D. Hanks happened to be waiting for the elevator. He, too, greeted us warmly and asked what we were doing in the building. When we told him, he seemed very pleased, then graciously introduced himself to Jennifer and Chris as we rode down together. This was a fortuitous meeting, because Marion D. Hanks was the only other General Authority openly supportive of liberals in the Church. When we walked out the door onto South Temple, fifteen-year-old Jennifer exclaimed, "Geez, I didn't know they had guys like that down here!" Elders Dunn and Hanks were surely a dying breed. This bracing experience notwithstanding, it is difficult to describe the toll this whole affair took on our four children, then ranging from ten to nineteen years of age. It can't be easy to have your mother punished by

the Church you attend for writing a book that wins prizes and that almost everyone you know praises warmly.

Greatly magnified sales of the Emma book, coupled with the bad press the Church continued to receive for trying to silence its authors, led to an odd and unsatisfying retraction of the ban. Linda had persisted in pressing for a resolution of the impasse through our stake president, Gene Hansen, and he continued to be genuinely concerned and helpful. On the eve of a KSL television interview with Linda concerning the upcoming Mormon History Association meeting (which was sure to include questions about *Mormon Enigma* and the controversy surrounding it), she got a call from President Hansen explaining that the sanctions on Linda and Val had been lifted. When asked early in the interview about the ban, Linda reported with satisfaction that it had just been lifted. Ironically, however, the Church never announced or confirmed this action. In practical terms, therefore, the ban was never lifted because those who might have asked Linda or Val to speak were never informed that they were again free to extend such invitations.

As our *Dialogue* years, in which the *Mormon Enigma* controversy was imbedded, neared their end, Linda and I attended the gala dedication of the Obert and Grace Tanner Plaza at the University of Utah. The affair included dignitaries from both the city and the Church, and Gordon B. Hinckley was among them—then a counselor in the First Presidency. He recognized us, greeted us by name, and, at the end of a brief but cordial conversation, said: “Thank you for all the good you do.” We were both surprised but assumed President Hinckley didn’t really know who we were or in what controversies we had been involved. But a few days later we received a hand-written note from Hinckley in the mail. Acknowledging our *Dialogue* editorship, his letter ended with the same sentence: “Thank you for all the good you do.” He has been president of the Church for more than a decade now; and from a distance, I have observed and often admired that same openness and magnanimity in President Hinckley.

My exit from the bishopric after three and a half years of service came at my own behest. I had had good experiences as a Boy Scout during my pre-teen and teen years in Ohio, and I was eager for Eric to enjoy similar opportunities. Just as he was turning twelve, our Scoutmaster moved away and it fell to me as second counselor to recommend a new one. When I told Bishop Herbert that I had succeeded in my task and was

ready to nominate the new Scout leader, he asked me who it was. "Jack Newell," I replied. He blinked and said, "You can't do that and serve in the bishopric, too." When I explained that I wished to trade assignments, Howard said he would need to check with the stake president before moving ahead. That evening, Howard called me on the phone: "Jack, the stake president said, 'Whoever wants to be a Scoutmaster gets to be a Scoutmaster.' We will release you from the bishopric and sustain you as Scoutmaster next Sunday."

I accepted this new assignment with the understanding that I could include Heather in all the outdoor adventures of our little troop. Starting at age nine, then, Heather joined me, Eric, and his buddies on all Troop 14 hikes and campouts. With Ted Evans, we climbed 13,068-foot Wheeler Peak in Great Basin National Park the day before Heather's tenth birthday. Our troop enjoyed a great variety of Tuesday evening activities and weekend outings, and we paid enough attention to merit badge work to move the Scouts along on pace. I take satisfaction in the fact that each of the boys I started with that fall earned his Eagle in a timely fashion.

Sometime during those years as a Scoutmaster, I experienced the most deeply spiritual moment of my life to date. Sitting near the back of the Garden Park chapel during sacrament meeting one Sunday afternoon, drifting quietly away from the clatter of children and the drone of the speaker, I heard my mother's voice saying to me: "Jack, you are just the kind of man I always hoped you would become." I sat bolt upright in total surprise, then settled back in my seat closing my eyes. With a deep breath, I savored the inexplicable moment.

Church encouragement for young men to serve two-year missions became a factor to reckon with as Eric and his friends moved through high school. Linda and I had a clear stance. If Eric wished to go, we would back him enthusiastically. If he chose not to serve, we would support him just as vigorously in whatever else he opted to do with those crucial years of his early adulthood, just as we had with Chris and Jennifer before him. He showed no interest in the subject until, just before his nineteenth birthday, he suddenly announced that he wished to go. I felt good about his decision, and, on the eve of his departure, gave him "just one piece of advice"—which was my usual send-off when any of our children launched a major new step in life. On this occasion I urged Eric to listen as closely to what other people said about their beliefs as he hoped they would listen to

him present his views. If he would do this, I opined, he would get an education and they might as well.

Though Eric's reports from his short stint in the Missionary Training Center in Provo were truly strange, once he was off in the mission field I gained new respect for the program itself. Most of all, I greatly respected the way Eric conducted himself during his two years in rural Louisiana. He helped reconstruct a Protestant Church after a hurricane, attended and spoke at a black Baptist revival meeting, and became a trouble shooter for the mission president, a professor of sociology at BYU, when tensions broke out in different wards and branches between black and white members. Above all, he learned a great deal about people, poverty, and himself. To this day, he thanks Linda and me for letting his decision to serve be entirely his own—and we remain grateful that he served and learned so much from his experiences.

Bureaucracy on the Loose

My respect for individual Church leaders and many Church programs notwithstanding, my differences with Church policy and bureaucracy came to a head in the late 1980s. The Church set out to remodel the Garden Park Ward house about 1987. This unique architectural treasure was "to be brought up to standard" in the words of the Church Building Department. Without warning, we suddenly found the towering windows in the lovely old cultural hall ripped out and replaced by concrete slabs, the vintage hardwood basketball floor inside covered with all-weather carpet, and the walls lined with burlap. In the chapel, three large nineteenth-century Minerva Teichert paintings of biblical scenes were removed from the spaces that the architect had designed specifically for their display so that the building would be in compliance with a new "no decorative art" policy. Further, due to the structural crosses that appeared coincidentally in the leaded glass windows, they were slated for removal and replacement with clear glass. As an ironically humorous aside, the Carriage House was remodeled in this same renovation scheme and we were supposed to refer to it from then on as the "Remote Instructional Facility."

At the height of this controversy, a serious protest erupted involving members of both Garden Park wards as well as non-members in the neighborhood. Stake and ward leaders were urged to halt the destructive work on the historic building. As part of this effort, I wrote President Hinckley,

appealing to him to intervene to stop the desecration of the chapel and return the Teichert paintings. Within a few months, the Teichert paintings reappeared in the chapel. The stained glass windows were left undisturbed. A decade later, the concrete slabs were removed from the cultural hall and large windows were reinstalled. After all my struggles with the Church over intellectual freedom, this bureaucratic handling and partial desecration of the unique Garden Park Ward house was the final straw in my relationship with the Church as a organization. My spiritual health demanded a release from the storms of institutional religion.

Conscious Choices and Difficult Decisions

For more than twenty years, we had reared our children in the Church, taught both adults and youth in countless Sunday school, Relief Society, and youth classes, and served in a variety of ward and stake leadership positions. I raised my voice repeatedly in both private and public appeals as the Church turned increasingly against the things I held dear—including many of the things I believed it stood for when I chose to be baptized a member in 1963. I had supported Linda in her nine-year quest to write the Emma biography, and then stood with her during her personal struggle to deal with being undercut by the religion to which she had devoted so much of her life. Believing that I could affect the flow of events, I had thrown my heart into writing for *Dialogue* and *Sunstone*, speaking on intellectual freedom and scholarly integrity at public forums and academic meetings, and, finally, joining Linda in editing the journal. By 1990, I was at a crossroads.

By that time I was in the midst of a long project of my own. Sterling McMurrin and I were engaged in a series of fifty-two recorded conversations leading to a book that was to be published just after he died in 1996 as *Matters of Conscience: Conversations with Sterling M. McMurrin on Philosophy, Education, and Religion*. In reliving his similar history of conflict with the institutional Church a generation earlier, and watching others who were committed to the same principles spanning much of the twentieth century, I realized that people like me usually tread one of three paths: (1) They turn bitter and spend the rest of their lives on the margins of the Church (just inside or just outside the boundaries) nursing their obsessions, (2) They submit to their multi-generational family heritage of temple-going Mormonism and swallow their differences with the Church, or

(3) They move on in life, both spiritually and temporally. A dwindling few, like the phenomenal Lowell Bennion, endure.

Constitutionally, I am designed neither for bitterness nor submission, so my choice was natural. As a convert I did not have a phalanx of family elders who would see me as fracturing their eternal family or embarrassing their good name. Linda, with her longer history in the faith, empathized with my position, but she was more patient than I. Even so, I was uninterested in any but the simplest transition. I quietly slipped away from church-going and other institutional observances—while maintaining warm relationships with Church friends and admiring the good that I saw in leaders like President Hinckley and many others whom I know and respect at the local level. Our departure from Salt Lake City so I could serve as president of Deep Springs College in California in 1995 was a most welcome relief. It served as a definitive marker for me, and, I believe, for Linda.

Just six months earlier, however, a specific and happy event had forced our hands in a rather public watershed. Eric and Allison Jones were engaged and planning their marriage for Christmas week, 1994. They wished to be wed in the Salt Lake Temple and assumed that Linda and I, along with Allie's parents, would be there with them. As a condition of temple participation, members must pledge unflinching loyalty to all Church leaders and affirm their belief that the Mormon Church is the only true religion. I had not gone to the temple for years, but I knew I could not in good conscience make the required statements of loyalty. Eric and Allie were crestfallen when Linda and I told them we would not be with them in the temple for their sealing ceremony. At the end of a long and serious conversation in which we explained every facet of our beliefs, Allie suddenly stood up, held out her arms, and hugged us both tightly, saying softly, "I love you just the way you are, and I wouldn't want you to be any other way." With tears all around, their wedding plans proceeded and newly broadened familial bonds were forged in common understanding.

As the wedding date approached, we received a heartfelt appeal from our old friend, Ted Evans, then bishop of Garden Park Ward. He said he believed in us, considered us worthy by his standards, and thought it vital that we be with Eric and Allie for their temple marriage. He asked us to come down to the bishop's office to pick up temple recommends that he would prepare for us "after asking a few questions I know you can answer in good faith." Touching as Ted's trust and kindness were, accepting tem-

ple recommends would signify our agreement with the Church's position on issues over which we had come to differ fundamentally with it. More important, perhaps, I did not want to play into a system that I believed more firmly than ever uses familial bonds unfairly as levers to encourage outward professions of loyalty to the Church. I was in a crucible that pitted principles against one another that I had forged and sought to honor over my entire life: loyalty to my conscience, loyalty to my family, and noncooperation with institutional misuses of power.

In the end, I simply could not accept this offer that was tendered so genuinely by a friend and which would have meant so much to Eric and Allie. I could not profess in words, or imply by temple attendance, that I believed things that I no longer accepted as true. Neither could Linda. We accompanied Eric and Allie to the Salt Lake Temple door, waited at a coffee shop down the street, and then greeted them as a married couple two hours later. Inside the temple sealing room where marriages are performed, an attendant noticed the two empty seats next to Eric that are usually reserved for the groom's parents. She asked him which two people from among his family and friends in attendance he wished to invite to take those chairs. He told us later that he simply smiled and said, "I would like those seats left just as they are, thank you." Eric understood. And he knew we were with him and Allie in spirit.

Arriving Again at the Beginning, and Knowing the Place . . .

I believe that living in our time requires a constant succession of judgments about the claims we will allow institutions to make on our behavior and beliefs, and the sanctuary we must claim for the exercise of our own conscience. Nothing could have schooled me more thoroughly in the high stakes associated with this dilemma than the years from 1962 to 1995. I believe I am a better man and a finer teacher for these struggles. I am also convinced that our four children, having watched their mother's even-handed response to her treatment over the Emma book and having seen both of us strive to keep our spirits healthy and strong while dealing with the vagaries of Church authority during their formative years, understand things about the requirements, costs, and rewards of institutional loyalty and personal integrity that can be invaluable. As a family, we all tread different but related spiritual paths today, and we all love and respect each other passionately for what we believe and how we live—in common and in contrast with one another.

If our formative years were essentially wholesome and happy, we tend to find our way back to those roots later in life as we grapple with the complexities and ironies of living. This is surely true in my case, and it seems to be so with both of my sisters. Our childhood home was anchored on consciously principled living and lifted by sometimes unfathomable love. Mother drew inspiration from the life of Jesus and countless other noble human beings, served others selflessly, practiced forgiveness, and knew the meaning of grace. Urging us to live good lives, she taught by example the words of St. Augustine, "Love God and do as you will." Get things right in your heart, and your actions will meet the highest standards. Now in our sixties and seventies, Joyce, Lenette, and I have trod spiritual paths that include among us Mormonism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and existentialism. As young adults we argued furiously over our differences and emphasized what was distinctive about our beliefs. No longer. Different as our outward observances may be, we have converged on almost every important point—and all three of us, with our spouses, strive to honor principles of remarkable similarity. Know your own heart, stand up for what you believe, and let kindness rule your relationships with others near and far. A finer personal legacy than this, I do not know.

Epilogue: This I Believe

I believe that good and evil exist side by side on this earth, rooted in human nature. Evils arise from imperfections in the human soul itself—every human soul. Each of us weighs in the grand moral balance through the myriad decisions we make each day, nudging the scales imperceptibly one way or the other. The outcome is neither pre-determined nor fixed; the destiny of human civilizations and of our planet's diminishing bounty rest largely in our hands. Through our acts of will, each of us is capable of magnifying the joy or of deepening the suffering around us. Truth, or the Over-Soul as Emerson described the divine, has no hands, no voice, and no will but ours in this world.⁷ We are each responsible for marshaling our strengths and acting with courage, compassion, and justice. While we are creatures of the natural and human worlds in which we exist, we are not simply at their mercy. We are part of them and we affect them.

The beauty, nobility, and strength that we are capable of reaching, if we attain these heights at all, come by grace. They are inexplicable gifts from beyond, coming to one person through the innate goodness of a friend or the inexplicable kindness of a stranger, to others through inspi-

ration they find in nature or scripture, and to still others through quiet epiphanies. While the nature and form of the divine remain a mystery to me, I know this higher power can be magnified within the human heart and that acts of kindness, love, and mercy—often coming when we least expect them—are its truest expression.

In my judgment, no one knows anything certain about the existence of a supreme being, an afterlife, or the origins of consciousness. I believe firmly, however, in life after death as a perpetual rippling forth of the effects of our individual lives. So long as anyone remembers us, certainly, that is a kind of immortality, but our lives influence many generations beyond that as well. We are all the products of long-forgotten ancestors whose choices for good and ill affect us for centuries or millennia after their passing.

I conclude with the most intense epiphany in my experience. I was traveling with a small band of students and professors in the Galapagos Islands off the Ecuadorian coast in March 1990, when seven of us decided to brave the jungle for a day on Isabella Island, the largest in the group, to search for the giant tortoises that still inhabit its interior. Following Rodrigo, our Ecuadorian guide, we trekked and sweltered well into the afternoon—our hopes rising and falling repeatedly. Just as we had resolved to start back in disappointment, Rodrigo spotted a tortoise trail in the underbrush. We spun around to follow it for another hour. Suddenly we came to a pond where a dozen tortoises lay at the water's edge. Their backs were nearly as high as my waist, their lazy heads as large as my own. I was overcome just being in their presence, sensing my privileged association with the Bishop of Panama, who first described these unique animals when shipwrecked on the islands in 1535, and Charles Darwin whose sojourn there more than three hundred years later did much to stimulate his historic observations on natural selection and the origin of species.

Having been rewarded richly for our considerable exertions, we started the long, hot journey on foot back to the broken-down blue Ford schoolbus in which we had been transported many miles to the trailhead. We arrived at dusk, exhausted, dehydrated, and exhilarated. About twenty men, women, and children, poverty-stricken banana farmers all, were playing volleyball across a net of tied rags in the fading light. None spoke English; but when we emerged from the jungle, they saw us and motioned enthusiastically for us to join them, challenging us to a match. We jumped at the opportunity, squinting to see the dirty ball, slipping on the muddy

ground, and making a gallant effort until, reduced only to moonlight, we ended the game in something of a draw. With spontaneous backslaps and hugs all around, we left the clearing and piled into the rusty schoolbus. It would not start. Our guide and driver, shining a flashlight on himself, motioned for us to get out and push. We did, slipping and falling down in the muddy tracks, but ultimately managing to produce enough speed that the old engine turned over and roared into life.

We tumbled back into our seats. The bus lurched forward down the rough jungle road and I clung to the frame of the bench in front of me. In that moment I was overwhelmed by feelings of gratitude, humility, and peace beyond any I had known before. Time and place seemed to disappear. Distinctions in race, nationality, education, and privilege among myself, the students, the faculty, our guide, and those with whom we had just engaged in the volleyball game, simply left my consciousness. I felt as completely at home as I might have that same instant at 1218 Harvard Avenue in Salt Lake City. Joy overwhelmed me as everything—human and natural—simply merged into a whole. As tears welled up in my eyes, I knew that our destinies as human beings, as co-inhabitants with other creatures, and with the earth itself, were indistinguishable and inseparable. And I knew as never before that I had aims to fulfill, energy to spare, and gifts to give.

Onward.

Notes

1. Norman Maclean, "A River Runs Through It," in *A River Runs Through It and Other Stories* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), ix.

2. Hugh B. Brown, Brigham Young University convocation address, May 13, 1969.

3. To capture the remarkable tenor of the LDS Church in the era of David O. McKay's leadership, read Chapter 1 of Gregory A. Prince and Wm. Robert Wright's prize-winning *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005).

4. L. Jackson Newell, "Mormon Prophets and Modern Problems," *Sunstone* 5, no. 4 (July-August 1980): 37-38.

5. L. Jackson Newell, "Personal Conscience and Priesthood Authority," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 13, no. 4 (Winter 1980): 81-87.

6. Devery S. Anderson, "A History of *Dialogue*, Part Three: The Utah Experience," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 35, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 1-70.

7. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Over-Soul," in *Selected Essays* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1982), 211-21.