

DIALOGUE

A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

sad reading

Mary Bradford's (XIV:2) interview with Sonia Johnson is a valuable service, but it made very sad reading, looking in, as it were, on the self-destruction of so talented a person as Sonia. It was like watching a person treading precariously along a precipice, losing her balance and plunging to destruction.

From within the fold, Sonia's was a powerful and influential voice for women's rights. Working from within it was in her power to instigate improvements in the way the Church treats women, and especially in the way Mormon men see and treat women. As a bitter apostate she has stripped herself of nearly all of that influence.

It is clear to anyone who has scratched beneath the surface of the Sonia matter that it was Sonia who took herself outside the Church. It was Sonia who placed herself in jeopardy and then practically pleaded with the brethren to excommunicate her. (This is *not* to say that mistakes were not made on both sides, or that Sonia was fairly treated once she placed her membership on the line. Indeed, it would appear that there were improprieties in the conduct of church disciplinary action against her. But we are naive if we believe for a moment that the General Authorities are going to overturn actions of church courts on grounds that technical errors were made by local officials, as do the criminal courts.)

Sonia's case would seem to be an almost classic representation of apostasy. A person begins with a complaint, even a justified complaint, and lets the pursuit of it completely unbalance them. They lose their equilibrium and soon are finding fault where fault does not lie. At some point pride runs away with reason. It is painful to admit—even to one's self—that one has been wrong, so one begins to lay the blame at the feet of others, turning from one apostasy to another, adding apostasy to apostasy.

Just how complete that apostasy has become is evident to those who follow Sonia in the press. Sonia's apostasy and excommunication are a dual tragedy. It is a personal tragedy for the individual who

commits spiritual suicide. But when that person has such great potential for leadership within the Church—even in an indirect, unofficial way—it is a tragedy for the Church to lose that person's influence.

Her excommunication and continued leadership in "Mormons for ERA" cannot help but hurt the women's cause within the Church. She has become so radical and vehement in her attacks on the presiding brethren that it makes it difficult, if not impossible, for active Latter-day Saints to be members of that organization.

I feel cheated.

Terrence L. Day
Pullman, Washington

I send this hesitantly.

As a subscriber since your inception I have always received inspiration and strength from your publication. The last issue, the sounding board for apostates, left me with an empty, sad feeling. I recently gave two gift subscriptions, and after the last issue I sensed the same feeling I get when we invite friends to Church and the talks are inappropriate and the children misbehave.

Michael L. O'Brien, D.D.S.
Omro, Wisconsin

perspectives

Having just polished off the Summer 1981 issue, cover to cover, and as a charter subscriber, I am compelled to respond with a hearty thanks for continuing to give Mormon readers "perspective." Like sand to the oyster, you are helping the pearl grow. You are very much a necessity.

As an excommunicated Mormon (eleven years now), a former bishop, high councilor and earnest champion of the cause, I found myself relating strongly—at some moments with great pain and at others with a strong sense of understanding—to nearly every word, beginning with Margaret Munk's lead-off letter to the editor, "Time for Arts," and ending with Karl Keller's perceptive and delight-

ful mastication of Sondrup's *Arts and Inspiration: Mormon Perspectives*. These "bookends" to the issue seemed personally appropriate. As an artist I struggle with the issues (on a day-to-day basis) which surround the making of art. During my twenty adult years in the Church I never satisfactorily came to grips with the dividing of my allegiances, which were basic and very deep, between dedication to the religious structure with its pressures and obedience to my own talents. In many ways the term "Mormon artist" is indeed a contradiction. Art will always come out of the "now," never from what's "out there" in the millennia, and dealing with it on that basis (with the total energy and commitment necessary) was impossible when I was intimately engaged in the "program." And it never occurred to me, let alone any of the brethren, to give this artist some time to breathe, to be anxiously engaged in doing art. That, of course, is due to the Church's long-standing misconception of the role of the artist.

The two searching interviews (Sonia Johnson and Fawn Brodie) pushed another of my buttons which relates to having been on both sides of the fence—in and out of fellowship with the Saints and on both sides of the ecclesiastical desk (bishop/ward members). I breathed with Sonia as she became trapped between two causes—her love of the Church versus the emergence of her feminist sensibilities. Speaking out (rebellious) while trying at first to maintain her status as a Latter-day Saint eventually put her on a tight rope which in the Church you must either back off or fall off. The question is, of course, could she in conscience have done it any other way? And sadly, I understood, were I her bishop I could not have done his chore differently either. Yet I applaud Sonia in my heart because there is something in me which wants Mormon women to wake up to the realities of the world, and that includes an understanding of how men, as well, (especially those over forty-five) have been handicapped by playing out their equally stereotyped roles, both in and out of the Church.

I also salute Fawn Brodie who is still a fact of life despite the years Mormon historians have been methodically putting down her book while the Saints have

cried "evil" and convinced themselves it will all go away. Again, the sand in the oyster, perhaps made even more abrasive by Brodie's gender. Uncle David O., however, needn't have been embarrassed (if he was), or even saddened. Becoming educated or becoming a scholar, all a part of the glory of God, is not the most unpraiseworthy of enterprises, and Fawn Brodie just might be an important leavener in the scheme of things.

The article by Stephen Stathis was a pleasant update for me, integrating Mormon views—increasingly publicized—with current events, reaffirming (both negatively and positively) that not much has changed in the Kingdom. As an outsider/once insider, my overview has understandably expanded along with my tolerance of activities not Mormon. While it was a beautiful experience to be in the "family," to know the joys of service and of testimony (personal testimony may be lost but is never forgotten), it has also been worthwhile observing from the outside and, by contrast, coming to feel the personal pain, depression, loss and the otherwise full spectrum of feelings and experiences that so forcefully contribute to personal growth. Mistakes (sins) are great teachers, and since no person is without them, they can eventually be turned into healers. In my view there are many Mormons who could benefit from excommunication—I remember them; the haughty, the soft-spoken-self-righteous, the quiet bigots, the judgers, the piously devious—for they do not fully know who they are, what they are supposed to become or what living on this earth is all about.

Which brings me to Bush's treatise on excommunication. Funny how statistics are useful, how they open new vistas. The tenfold overall increase in excommunications since 1913 (from 1 in 6400 to 1 in 640) was a shocker to me. I had assumed that as an ex-Mormon I was a rare bird, a needle in a haystack. In our humiliation, our hurt, or anger, we Ex's quietly withdraw and are absorbed into society ("the world"). But it is interesting, and comforting, to know that some of the ex-brethren and sisters are abroad in the land, perhaps feeling, as I do, a loss of connection, of belonging. Yet we must

also ask, why this pronounced increase? What is going wrong in Zion? Is it simply a manifestation of the Church's tremendous growth? If not, what is happening to the gospel's holding power? In a modern world, Mormons, Jack Mormons, ex-Mormons and non-Mormons may all wonder together.

Robert Perine
Encinitas, Calif.

I appreciate the interview with Sonia Johnson by Mary Bradford in the Summer 1981 *Dialogue*. To champion the cause of women's rights to their American freedoms is a frustrating challenge! When children have lived in a home where father's rights are the only consideration, and men of authority are to be regarded as infallible and superior, I understand the feelings of rebellion. Why do men assume that if women are given their freedom of choice, they will choose to do evil? I am grateful to learn of Sonia's concern for the impoverished conditions to which some women are subjected.

Thanks also for Kathryn M. Daynes' letter to the editor, for clarifying equal rights from women's rights: "The emphasis of equal rights is to eliminate distinctions between men and women. The focus of women's rights is to eliminate discrimination against women while acknowledging women's special needs."

I, too, am concerned with the philosophy that if women were given the priesthood, that would mean the demise of the priesthood. If the priesthood is the power of God delegated to Man, created in His image, male and female, to act in His name for the benefit of humanity, men and women contributing their energy, talents and righteous desires to this cause, why should that mean the demise of the priesthood? When men or women presume that priesthood is authority to dictate what others believe and do, they are misinformed! I had to learn this to restore my faith and respect for patriarchs, matriarchs and their abilities to be channels of love from God through the power of his Spirit.

Rhoda Thurston
Hyde Park, Utah

I read my first *Dialogue* today—the summer 1981 edition dealing with the Sonia Johnson/ERA issues. I am disappointed in the way you chose to handle it. A true dialogue could perhaps have occurred with coverage of both Sonia Johnson's and the much-maligned Beverly Campbell's (a "frustrated feminist"? oh, come on) opinions. By deciding to represent only "Sonia's side" *Dialogue* has done its readers and its reputation a disservice.

I am a Mormon mother of three preschool children and even enjoy "baking bread," apparently a thoroughly despised occupation in Ms. Johnson's eyes. What ineffable snobbery! When Ms. Johnson attempts to belittle the role of motherhood, she is spouting sexist nonsense, promoting the view of success defined in terms of overt power, profession and money. If women are to be truly "liberated," we must be willing to "march to the beat of a different drummer" and measure success in terms of eternal truths, not as dictated by the "mothers of the women's movement" (Steinem, Abzug, Smeal) cited by Ms. Johnson.

Equality does not mean sameness. That is how women can believe in equality and the patriarchal order at the same time. Men and women share many ideals—achieving a Christ-like character, for example—but have legitimate differences as well. An unwillingness to admit these differences is one of the major weaknesses of the women's movement. Trying to mold women into little imitation men is the result, when all yardsticks for achievement are defined in terms of traditionally male fields of endeavor and is intellectual dishonesty of the first order.

Sonia Johnson is the tool of those who know they cannot promote ERA on its merits and have stooped to the exploitation of a poor woman who has thrown away her religious heritage for a mess of pottage.

As Rex E. Lee, United States Solicitor General and author of *A Lawyer Looks at the Equal Rights Amendment*, has noted, most discussions of ERA have produced

"more heat than light." *Dialogue's* contribution to the subject has once again upped the temperature without a corresponding increase of illumination.

Ann W. Peralta
Fayetteville, Arizona

Editor's note: See *Dialogue*, Spring XIV:1 and this issue, page 101.

There once was a gal named Sonia/Who felt oppressed by the men of Mormonia./ Said she with great zest, my rights they've suppressed./ And now she's living alonia.

Glenn Webster
Gilbert, Arizona

This is a fan letter

I thought your summer issue of *Dialogue* was superb. Especially your piece on Sonia and the update by Stathis.

Keep up the good work.

Peter Bart
Beverly Hills, California

classy malediction

It was such a joy to read that classy excommunication malediction of Spinoza in Lester E. Bush's article. I liked the ceremony too—the extinguishing of candles, one by one, during the reading of the curse. Why can't our Church come up with an impressive excommunication ceremony?

A few years ago I was quite impressed with our Elders Quorum Instructor's response to heretical remarks made by me. Bringing his right arm to the square, he said, "In the name of Jesus Christ, and by the authority of the holy priesthood invested in me, I rebuke you." I regret now that I disparaged the majesty of his rebuke by telling him that he had just used the Lord's name in vain. He rushed from the room, all upset, kicking over a chair as he departed. Members of the quorum hastened to comfort me, assuring me that he really didn't mean it. Poor man. A few months later he was excommunicated from the Church, after confessing a sexual transgression to the Saints assembled. But I think he was rebaptized soon after. He was an asset to

the Church—a great champion of distinctive spiritual positions held dear in the LDS enclaves of California; moreover, he was, without doubt, the finest softball player in our ward.

Rustin Kaufman, Jr.
Woodside, California

a correction to the history

Thank you for publishing the interview of Fawn Brodie. As Fawn's sister I am very proud of her. I would appreciate your making one correction, however. The biographical information in the latter part of the first paragraph refers *not* to our grandfather, but to our father, Thomas Evans McKay. We were celebrating what would have been his one-hundredth birthday in the summer of 1975, and he was one of eight children.

Thank you for your publication—we really enjoy it.

Barbara M. Smith
Provo, Utah

memories of brodie

I enjoyed Sterling M. McMurrin's eloquent tribute to Fawn McKay Brodie (XIV:1) and the personal oral history interview (XIV:2). I would like to relate my experience at the memorial services held for Professor Brodie at UCLA on January 17, 1981.

Seven speakers reflected upon Fawn Brodie's role as a wife and mother, neighbor and community activist, writer and teacher. Among her friends and colleagues who spoke were UCLA professors of history Hans Rogger, Peter Lowenberg and Stanley Wolpert; psychohistorian Elizabeth Marvick, neighbors Polly Plesset and Lamont Johnson, and psychoanalyst Maimon Leavitt. (A transcript of these services is available at the University of Utah Special Collections Library.)

With their stories and personal impressions of Fawn, the speakers provided a glimpse of the person behind the author we have met in print. They spoke of Fawn as a caring mother and grandmother who nurtured her three children when they were young, then treated them as peers when they grew up. Her home was full of flowers and books and things that she and her husband, Bernard, had

made for each other—he was also a writer and professor (of political science). Fawn was an accomplished cook; her family was said to be her principal occupation.

Although she enjoyed recognition for her books and lectures, Fawn was not above attending to details. She devoted herself to her students, helping them to revise their papers and to get published. She worked hard and wasted no time, either in small talk or useless motion.

She was involved with the historical persons about whom she wrote; her children said that she often dreamed about Jefferson.

Fawn was sensitive to the condition of women and Blacks, two groups she spoke of as having comparable status in the Utah community and Church of her youth. She particularly disliked deception and bore public witness to the truth as she saw it, whether by writing letters to the Los Angeles Times or by presenting herself as a heretic to her community when, in her book, *No Man Knows My History*, she characterized the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith as merely reflecting the views of his times.

She was active in community affairs and staunchly committed to her neighborhood. Her neighbor, film producer Lamont Johnson, related an incident in which Fawn led a defense of “their hill” in the Pacific Palisades of West Los Angeles against commercial exploitation. A group of developers had confronted the neighborhood with plans to build condominiums, parking lots and “similar horrors” just below their Pacific Palisades homes. After the neighbors heard a specious pitch about the benefits of tennis courts and swimming pools for everyone, “Fawn snapped her head to one side and said, ‘Oh, you are a living deceit, sir! I write you down for a scoundrel!’ ”

Here Johnson perceived the archaic invective of Fawn’s biographical subjects, African explorer and poet Richard Burton and Thomas Jefferson. Although the neighbors defeated that development, Johnson saw just a bit of irony that in its place now stands a Mormon church, a development which came on somewhat later.

George D. Smith, Jr.
San Francisco, Calif.

people, not programs

In reference to Martha Bradley’s “The Cloning of Mormon Architecture” (XIV:1), I wish I knew who Martha Bradley had talked to for her to say that members of the LDS Church are dissatisfied with their buildings. How many of them were there, and what was the source of their discontent? My own sense of it as a missionary in Brazil was that a few members resent extraneous Americanism in the Church and some nonmembers were confused by the physical appearance of our chapels. Certainly if the gospel is to save souls, not statistics, our buildings should serve people, not programs.

I also wish that Bradley had said something about climate response. Thank heaven for energy shortages that will force our buildings to once again respond to heat, cold, wind, light and all those other wonderful rhythms and forces of nature that our buildings used to dance with. (By the way, when is there going to be a *Dialogue* dedicated to environmentalism and the gospel?)

One more wish: that Bradley would have developed some of the doctrinal implications of the existing standard plans. For example: 1) Our casual architectural treatment of our worship spaces (entrance sequence, finishes, connection to cultural hall, absence of daylighting of stained glass, etc.) seems to imply or result from a casual attitude toward Deity. 2) The canonization of the standard plan symbolizing an extensive and very rigid formula for piety rather than a few fundamental absolutes (temple recommend interview) with lots of room for personality.

Jeff Jarvis
Eugene, Oregon

forgotten sda’s

In *Dialogue*, XIV:1, page 92, Mr. Stathis has quoted a statement from Kenneth L. Woodward of *Newsweek* magazine. This statement is not at all accurate. For example, the Seventh-day Adventist church which began in 1863 in the United States is currently working in 190 countries, while the LDS Church is working in only 83. At the end of 1980 the world-wide membership of the SDA church was 3,480,518, with 80% outside of North

America. The LDS membership was 4,638,000. The LDS church began thirty-three years before the SDA church, and thus the larger membership of the two! The annual growth rates for these two churches are rather close.

Unfortunately there is a tendency on the part of some LDSs and SDAs to think that their respective faiths are almost totally unique and vastly superior to others. Each group appears to be very uninformed about the other. Someone needs to do a serious comparative study of these two nineteenth-century American religious faiths. I would be very happy to be a resource-person on Seventh-day Adventism if someone should ever decide to do such a study.

You might be interested in knowing that, as a Seventh-day Adventist, I have a deep interest in Mormon history and theology. I belong to the Mormon History Association, receive *Ensign* at home, read *Dialogue*, *Sunstone* and *BYU Studies* at the library where I work. I also subscribe to *Utah Historical Quarterly*, have a large personal library on Mormoniana and have travelled the Mormon Trail back to Nauvoo, Far West, Adam-Ondi-Ahman and Liberty jail. Mormon history is fascinating to say the least.

I am also deeply interested and involved in the history and theology of my own Seventh-day Adventist church.

Gary W. Shearer
Loma Linda, Calif.

card pro and con

Sandy Straubhaar's review of Orson Scott Card's *A Planet Called Treason* (XIV:1) has the unique distinction, in my own opinion, of being more sexually suggestive and explicit than the book she reviewed. And other than some diatribes I used to read in *Mother Jones*, it is the most sexist review I've yet seen in Mormondom. Her review is neither edifying nor constructively critical, but downright slanderous of Card in a couple of places. Obviously Ms. Straubhaar is not a typical *Dialogue* reader with a breadth of learning and a depth of insight and appreciation, for she is merely taking a feminist swipe at male readers (of *Dialogue* and Card) with her shallow opinions which are constructed

only on her own personal taste, not of open-minded critical judgment.

I've read *Treason* twice, have written a review myself of his works and have even talked to the author about them. For what it's worth, here is my opinion of the work: it is highly edifying not only because of the insights Card has always been known for, but because *Treason* is a science fiction satire on our society. Sandy's beef about breasts is a case in point, for I interpreted Card's use of breasts in the story as a Swiftian satire on modern society's excessive love affair with female breasts and the use of them for everything but (almost) one of the chief purposes for which they were created: nursing babies. But considering the insecure, cry-baby attitudes of ERA feminists today who already have more talent than they use (creative) and more freedom than they intelligently know what to do with (except to heckle the men who have abused and neglected them), I should have expected that such a review was long overdue—with Orson Scott Card the scapegoat.

Gary P. Gillum
Payson, Utah

The review in *Dialogue* (XIV, 1) of Orson Scott Card's third science fiction novel, *A Planet Called Treason*, asserts that the author is a misogynist. It is true that women do not fare well in Card's novels; neither do men. His science fiction worlds are as unpleasant as our own. Occasionally he creates a character who rises a little above the others, but all of the characters are flawed, as we are. The reviewer's main objection seems to be that Lanik is unhappy about the growth of breasts and ovaries on and in his body. What? Should he be pleased? Given the premises of the story, his reaction is completely reasonable. It is hardly a "...revulsion. . .to women's bodies."

I believe that the reviewer's comments are largely irrelevant to an evaluation of the book as well as inaccurate. The problem seems to be that Card did not write the book the way that she wanted him to write it. That is hardly justification for what amounts to a personal attack on the moral character of the author.

A longer review in *Sunstone* (VI, 4) suffers from many of the same problems. Card's women are all terrible, except for the ones who aren't! One wonders if the reviewers noted that the men, who are equally stereotyped, are as bad if not worse? Neither review mentions that all three major female characters in *Songmaster* are heroines who establish themselves as effective leaders. Perhaps misogyny, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder.

The *Sunstone* review also takes Card to task for the violence in his novels. I defy anyone to show that his novels are any more violent than our real world. Consider the Iranian revolution, Idi Amin's Uganda, Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia or the bombings of Dresden and Hiroshima. Card shows violence in such detail that the reader can experience it. Is it better to have a nice, clean novel where planets are vaporized at long distance (as in *Star Wars* and various *Star Trek* stories) or to show violence for the horrible but common thing that it is? Card is not guilty of glamorizing violence as are many other science fiction writers.

Card writes science fiction for money, the major motivation of any commercial writer. His success attests to his skill at gauging and writing for the science fiction market. He also wrote articles for the *Ensign* for money, since he was an editorial employee of that magazine. His job was, and is, to turn out copy of a particular kind. Commercial writing is formula writing and cannot be didactic. The non-commercial writings of an author are more likely to reflect the author's values and character. I suggest that Card's prolific noncommercial writing, primarily poetry and drama, demonstrates his commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to the value of human souls, both female and male. These two irresponsible reviews have done him a great disservice.

James L. Farmer
Provo, Utah

Physical transformations of various types have been a recurring theme in fictive literature for some time: Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Woolf's *Orlando*, Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, and Heinlein's *I Will Fear No*

Evil, to name but a few. O.S. Card's fantasy novel *A Planet Called Treason* is thus, on one hand, but another installment in a long tradition, and there are doubtless many who will take no offense at what he has written. The proverbial other hand, however, tells us that another view is a possibility.

S. Straubhaar, in her recent review of Card's novel, has presented such a view. From a feminist perspective, even one self-effacingly called "fledgling," Lanik Mueller's opinions of women's physical and mental endowments, as presented by Card, can be nothing but offensive. Although I find feminist literary criticism as suspect as any other "-ist," Straubhaar's point that Card's novel could lead to further public stereotyping of a Mormon attitude toward women is well taken. Perhaps because I did not sense the same type of personal attack as Straubhaar, I found later parts of the novel, particularly sections on time relativity and illusionistic mystery to be enjoyable and several of the word plays to be mildly amusing, but the first chapter, with its extraordinary sense of revulsion at the female body, kept lingering at the back of my mind.

Card, of course, needs no one's approbation to continue his literary career. He might, however, find greater success if he can avoid antagonizing half of his potential audience. He can take some satisfaction in knowing that he will get some of my money, since I bought a copy of his book because of the review in *Dialogue*. At the bookseller's, however, I asked the clerk, "From a review I've read, this book seems to be pretty bad—will you buy it back if I don't like it?" She replied, "It's just fantasy; nobody takes it seriously. If you really don't like it, take it to a book exchange and trade it." In spite of the parts I did enjoy, I could not help but take certain aspects of the novel seriously, and *A Planet Called Treason* is off to be traded. I simply cannot condone Card's attitude and will not keep his book on my shelf.

Steven A. DeHart
St. Paul, Minnesota

I commend Sandy Straubhaar for her forthrightness in reviewing Scott Card's *Planet Called Treason* (XIV, 1).

As a bookseller and addict of the printed page I am disturbed by the direction of contemporary science fiction writing. Its heavy reliance on sexual themes, physical violence and, more particularly, the juxtaposition of these two elements is a distressing departure from sci fi's traditional emphasis. It has heretofore not only given readers mind-stretching fiction suggesting unimagined possibilities but, far more significantly, has provided spiritual metaphor. The new wave of science fiction writers seems generally to forget (or ignore) this latter aspect of their tradition; if this view predominates, the genre will cease to provide us with insight and inspiration and will serve only as a pale reflection of our own society couched in some bizarrely appointed setting—and that in slick formulaic prose which has little of the richness of theme or style to be found in fine writing.

With specific reference to Card, I am offended by the values exemplified in his writing and directly articulated in his self-serving and relativist literary rationale. (See "A Mormon Writer Looks at the Problem of Evil in Fiction," a lecture given by Card March 13, 1980, at BYU during the sesquicentennial observance.) In neither case do I find much evidence of the Gospel ideals we presumably share. This is disappointing not only because I would hope to see those values better represented literarily but because science fiction seems to me to be a particularly apt medium for deft fictional highlighting of absolutes.

I find I am equally embarrassed by Card's reception among Latter-day Saints, which provides a good example of an unfortunate mindset prevalent among American Mormons. The fact that Card's work falls not only squarely but intentionally within the framework of current sci-fi writing has apparently done nothing to dim his reception among the faithful. The Church still labors under the burden of insecurity assumed during years of persecution and social/intellectual deprecation. Working from this position, church members seem generally to feel

that any of us who gain a measure of success or recognition in the world deserve our automatic adulation and respect. The example of prominent LDS role models and our official church response to them tend to teach that compromise is acceptable so long as it produces success which can be put to financial or propagandistic advantage.

Reacting against our own insecurity, we have worked hard to assimilate into mainstream society—with obvious success. In doing so we have adopted the values of the world along with its lifestyle. Indeed, many of us have apparently decided with Card that "There is no universal standard for judging the worth of a piece of fiction."

Dick Butler
Menlo Park, Calif.

why not joseph smith and thomas paine?

Gary Gillum, in his review of my book, *Mormon Answer to Skepticism* (Vol. XIII, 3), does not fault Joseph Smith for rationally critiquing the theology of the existing churches of his time and ignoring their piety, but he faults my study for doing it. He charges that I've misapplied Mormon scripture references and am guilty of reading into the texts what isn't there (eisegesis), but cites no examples nor shows what points of my study are vitiated by these alleged indiscretions.

Gillum doesn't believe thirty years a long enough time for Paine's book to have been a "burning issue," although I detail how its themes rapidly spread and that the Smith family had the book and knew its argumentation. Deism was still an issue in Painesville, Ohio, in 1831, enough so that when new Mormon convert Sidney Rigdon tried to convert his congregation to his new faith, they rebutted him with arguments "which he himself formerly urged against deists" (*Painesville Telegraph*, Feb. 15, 1831).

Clayton Publishing House is not a vanity press, but would the argumentation have less relevance if it were? Gillum's right, though, about the typographical errors. The most unfortunate typo is on p. 91, bottom line, where it places Smith's Liberty Jail sojourn in 1828 rather than 1838. Daniel Bachman has

twice cited this to dismiss the force of the argument, even though the statement's footnote, no. 103, p. 98, has the correct date.

The one substantial critique of historical method that Gillum offers is that "Hullinger's entire scenario is built on circumstantial evidence." Exactly! Mormon faith is also an hypothesis based upon circumstantial evidence and other constructs are possible.

The Mormon prophet himself has confirmed my "circumstantial scenario" concerning the Harris-Anthon consultation, about which I challenge the familiar Mormon story and trace it back through five phases to the reconstructed event.

First, the RLDS transcript was not what Anthon had seen according to his letter to E. D. Howe. Now his description is vindicated, and it helped establish the original transcript's authenticity.

Second, Smith's personal statement that Anthon could not read the transcript in accord with Isaiah 29:11-12 confirms my findings, matches his later statements and raises questions about his adding many other elements in the 1838 version.

Third, Smith's comment surely confirms my finding that Anthon did not write a report to the Palmyrans authenticating the transcript, the language and Smith's ability to translate. Rather, it boosts Joseph Knight, Sr.'s recall that Anthon "rote a very good piece to Joseph and said if he would send the original he would translate it."

Fourth, Smith's holographic comment strengthens my contention that he used the Isaiah text as a blueprint to follow and read into (eisegesis) the biblical text his presentation in the Book of Mormon.

Finally, the original Anthon transcript and Smith's comment make the 1838 official version of the Harris-Anthon consultation prime evidence that, even if Martin Harris told the story so familiar to all who know Mormonism, Smith at least blessed it and changed his own version. That raises the question of his intentions—a point I cover in my "circumstantial scenario."

Would these points "unwittingly" reaffirm for Gillum why the Church of Christ was established? If so, I await another hypothesis to account for them.

I do not expect that my study will prove to be a detriment to any Mormon's faith, for I do heed Dr. Bushman's warning in his *Dialogue* roundtable with Wesley Walters:

. . . spiritual experience is the most compelling data. . . Were a case made against the Book of Mormon. . . integrity would compel Mormons to hold onto their beliefs.

As to historical claims, however, it may bring a little more caution and a shift in the apologetic approach in future appraisals of Mormon origins.

Robert N. Hullinger
Cincinnati, Ohio

ED. NOTE: *This was sent to Dialogue in response to a request to Mr. Hullinger to shorten a longer critique of the Gillum review.*

gillum responds

The greatest folly in the reviewing of books lies in the fact that paper and pen are no substitute for mind and heart in knowing the author (or reviewer) and his intentions. This results in what to me and other Mormon scholars was a very fair and charitable review of Hullinger's book contrasted to William D. Russell's estimation that my review was merely a cheap putdown, or D. James Croft's insinuation (*Sunstone* vol. 6, #2, p. 16) in "Book of Mormon Wordprints Re-examined" from reading the same review that my faith in Mormonism is based on Book of Mormon wordprint studies! But lest I sound exonerated from any fault, may I hastily add that there were certain things I would gladly have altered in the Hullinger review because I understood his motives and heart after a delightful conversation with him on the phone and a warm exchange of letters.

Both Hullinger's and Russell's criticisms of my review were based on their expectations of a review in *Dialogue* being of a scholarly, expressionistic nature, instead of my apologist's impressionistic stature. I make no apologies for my perspective, although I can readily see how it clashes with those scholars who lean towards humanistic approaches in explaining away Mormonism. I will even

admit to a little sloppy thinking in the review, caused not only by deadlines but by my tendency to leave out examples. (For example, Russell is correct in saying that I did not supply examples of Hullinger's lifting Book of Mormon passages out of context—if he is thinking in literary or semantic contexts. My perspective, however, was cultural, and I regret not qualifying myself.) Both Russell and Hullinger served to remind me, not without a little pain, that it is impossible to please everyone. And I commend to them, myself and all others who would undertake the unpleasant task of reviewing a book, the reading of Jan Shipp's "Writing About Modern Mormonism" in the March 1979 *Sunstone*.

Meanwhile, I can only apologize for my "both-sides-of-the-fence" perspective, although I will never forsake it. It is best expressed by echoing the words of Spencer W. Kimball, quoted by Robert D. Hales in the October 1981 General Conference: "If you could see what I have seen. . ." My perspective remains thus: *We can see. We can know. We can understand.*

Gary P. Gillum
Payson, Utah

unturmed stones

I commend *Dialogue* for giving me hours of intellectual and spiritual stimulation while publishing masterful essays on some of Mormonism's more sensitive subjects. The poignant topics of blacks and the priesthood, Mormonism and evolution, capital punishment and the Young-Pratt controversies, just to name a few, have surely added much depth and insight to church-related literature. I have appreciated this spirit of open inquiry very much.

Yet, even with all of *Dialogue's* noteworthy efforts, several stones seem to remain unturmed. This is natural and is to be expected in a progressive system of truth-seeking, as Mormon theology appears to be (see Isaiah 28:9–10; D&C 128:21, etc.). One issue in particular that concerns me is how two prophets can unmistakably contradict each other while each is allegedly speaking the word of the Lord. True, prophets are not infallible and

are only prophets when "acting as such" (DHC 5:265); nevertheless, in several instances, what was the word of the Lord through His prophet in the past is now heresy, "speculation," or merely the prophet's opinion. Three examples demonstrate what I mean.

1) Does God know *all* things—that is, is he omniscient, thus fully comprehending every speck of truth in the universe? Or will he continue to learn new verities as long as eternity endures? As Bergera so ably brought to our attention recently, the Prophet Brigham Young adamantly held that the omniscience of God "was a fals doctrin & not true that there never will be a time to all eternity when all the God[s] of Eternity will cease advancing in power knowledge. . . for if this was the case eternity would cease to be. . ." (*Dialogue*, Vol. XIII, 2, pp. 12–13; original spelling and punctuation). Another source finds Young declaring that he *never* expected to see the time when he would stop learning, then adding, "Now do not lariat the God that I serve and say that he can not [sic] learn any more; *I do not believe in such a character*" (*Deseret News*, June 18, 1873, p. 309; italics added. See also *JD* 1:349–353; 3:202–203, etc.).

Some 100 years later in 1971, however, another prophet, Joseph Fielding Smith, testified to exactly the opposite: ". . . *I know. . . that God is omnipotent and omniscient; that he has all power and wisdom; and that his perfections consist in the possession of all knowledge, faith or power. . . and for that matter, the fullness of all godly attributes*" (cited in J.M. Heslop and Dell R. Van Orden, *Joseph Fielding Smith: A Prophet Among the People*, p. 68; italics added. See also pages 59 and 69).

Both men were speaking in their capacities as president of the Church and yet, their doctrines were diametrically opposed.

2) How was Adam created? Brigham Young rigidly affirmed that God "created man, as we create our children; for there is no other process of creation in heaven or on earth" (*JD* 11:122). Similarly, he made it clear that Adam "was made as you and I are made, and no person was ever made upon any other principle" (*JD* 3:319; see also *JD* 6:31; 9:283; and 4:218). In the *Deseret News*, December 27, 1913,

section 3, page 7, President Joseph F. Smith is quoted as saying that "Adam. . . was. . . born of woman into this world, the same as Jesus, and you and I."

Today's prophet, however, apparently does not agree, for he says: "The Creators breathed into their [Adam and Eve] nostrils the breath of life and man and woman became living souls. We don't know exactly how their coming into this world happened, and when we're able to understand it the Lord will tell us" (Spencer W. Kimball cited in the *Ensign*, March, 1976, p. 72; italics added). The qualifier *exactly* could be tricky, but the implications are clear, nevertheless.

Again, we have another face-off. Brigham Young says that Adam was born of woman into this world, and in fact, announces that he himself is a descendant of God in "both spirit and body" (*JD* 6:31; italics added). President Kimball, the living prophet, says we don't know. Through whom is the Lord speaking, anyway?

3) Is Adam our God and the Father of our spirits? Brigham Young, as many *Dialogue* readers are well aware, championed the affirmative. In a June 8, 1873, sermon, printed twice—once in the *Deseret News* on June 14, 1873, and again in the weekly edition four days later—he boldly asserted that Adam is our God, the father of our spirits, was an exalted being before coming to this earth—and that God revealed all of this to him! Brigham Young taught the Adam-God doctrine for over twenty years (see *JD* 1:50–51; General Conference address, October 8, 1854, Church Archives).

But today's prophet declares exactly the opposite: "We denounce that theory [the Adam-God theory] and hope that everyone will be cautioned against this. . . false doctrine" (*Church News*, October 9, 1976). An interesting sidelight is Bruce R. McConkie's remarks at BYU on June 1, 1980, regarding the seven deadly heresies of Mormonism. Though not the president of the Church, he was nevertheless quick to clarify the fact that the Adam-God doctrine was a heresy kept alive by the devil, and that anyone who believes it, in light of the temple endowment and the Book of Moses, "does not

deserve to be saved" ("The Seven Deadly Heresies." BYU, June 1, 1980, taped account).

The list does not stop here, by any means. We have Brigham Young declaring that the penalty for a white of the "chosen seed" marrying and "mixing his blood" with a black person "*under the law of God, is death on the spot. This will always be so*" (*JD* 10:110; italics added). Yet, today, the law of God, which Brigham said could never be changed, definitely has been altered (Provo, Utah *Daily Herald*, August 23, 1981). For that matter, Brigham Young testified that blacks could "*never*" hold the priesthood "*until the last ones of the residue of Adam's posterity are brought up to that favourable position*" (*JD* 7:291). He made it clear that this would be *after* the resurrection (*JD* 2:143).

While it delights me to no end to see the "curse" removed and some of the early church teachings repudiated, still, more thorough explanations of the contradictions are needed. Though these issues are not new ones, the resolutions offered certainly have room for improvement.

Assurances to the effect that "the early brethren were merely walking with the best light they had," or "it doesn't matter one bit what was said by former prophets which contradicts the current one" appear weak, if not totally unacceptable. This kind of an explanation opens the door to all types of problems. For example, will today's truths spoken by the living prophet who can never lead us astray (Heber J. Grant, cited in *Ensign*, October, 1972, p. 7.) one day become tomorrow's heresies? If so, which ones? This certainly does not fit Paul's words that "the foundation of God standeth sure" (II Timothy 2:19).

As a consequence, I think it would be timely if *Dialogue* would publish some in-depth material on resolving conflicts such as those I have just mentioned. I am sure we would all have something to gain by it.

Loren Franck
Provo, Utah

ED. NOTE: See our next issue, Spring 1982.

second anointings

Ken Earl is incorrect in his assumption that second anointings have disappeared from current temple ceremonies. I personally know of one couple who received them from David O. McKay and two couples who have received them from Spencer Kimball. I assume there are many more. These people were counseled to talk about their experience with no one and to record in their journals only that they had received their second anointings. I couldn't get any more information from them.

Apparently the second anointings are the fulfillment of the promise given at the beginning of the endowment that if you are worthy you will be called up and anointed a King and a Priest or a Queen and a Priestess rather than "only to become such." I have heard that, many years ago, stake presidents had recommend forms for second anointings, but that now only the Twelve recommend worthy couples. If the Prophet is the only man (and I understand he is) who can perform this ceremony it would have to be limited to relatively few church members from the lack of his available time alone. Though probably relatively few church members are fully worthy of that ultimate anointing, and probably few of them come in contact with the Apostles.

Carrel H. Sheldon
Arlington, Massachusetts

pats. . .

I not only rejoice but also click my heels and clap my hands every time *Dialogue* appears in my mailbox. I appreciate your fine efforts. When my children are launched I am coming back to be your envelope stuffer—I could even be persuaded to make your beds!

Tammy J. Nichols
Redding, Calif.

Enclosed is my check for *Dialogue* for yet another year. You will see I continue to pay the going rate rather than the student rate, for which I could have qualified for the past six years. My conscience would

prick too painfully to do that, since I think you are fools to sell such a fine product so cheaply!

Lou Ann Stoker Dickson
Tempe, Arizona

ED. NOTE: *We are finally giving in. After ten years our rates were raised from \$20.00 to \$25.00 and \$10.00 to \$12.00. Thanks for staying with us!*

. . .and pans

I originally started receiving *Dialogue* as a gift subscription from a family member. Thus far I haven't read a single issue that hasn't left me somewhat agitated.

Admittedly, a few of the articles and poetry in *Dialogue* are sensitive and enlightening, but the general overtones are, from a Mormon point of view, negative and critical.

The fictional story "Another Angel" that appeared in the Summer 1981 issue was disgusting! Not only was the content offensive, it led to no apparent conclusion.

Dialogue—"a journal of Mormon thought" would have you believe its opinions are shared by so-called Mormon "thinkers" of our society. Judging from some of the letters to the editors, and from some of the articles that appear, it is this reader's opinion that *Dialogue* is written mainly by, and is most appealing to frustrated Mormons who haven't the courage to apostatize, nor the inner strength of character it takes to gain a personal testimony of the truth of the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ and its living prophets!

Sharon Stephenson
Clarksburg, Md.

hang in there

With each issue of *Dialogue* I fight the urge to write and tell you how timely and meaningful the articles are to me. Lately it's been my only source of depth in the Church. But volume XIII (Winter 1980) with its article on art touched very close to home. I feel obligated to let you know how much I enjoyed it.

I am a senior studying music composition at Utah State University. This major is very difficult. Not only the study but having to put up with the social stigma against artists in general. Yet this choice involved a lot of serious reflection and eternal goals.

After showing my first poppy arrangement of "I Am a Child of God" to my advisor (who is Mormon and who tactfully woke me up), I've been fighting the homogenization of Mormon art. Until now it seemed I was alone and losing the battle.

My only regret is that the people who really needed to read that article probably spent the money on another clone of *Saturday's Warrior*.

If you ever stopped publishing I would give up the fight and apply for work at the Osmonds' studio.

Fearing I might miss a future issue, I've enclosed a check that should cover a two-year subscription.

David Michael Cottle
Logan, Utah

double call for literary papers

Two deadlines are coming up fast for sessions of the Association for Mormon Letters. The third annual East Coast session is tentatively planned for the first weekend in May in Boston. Paper proposals should be to Chad Wright, program chairman, at 1800 Jefferson Parkway, #301, Charlottesville, VA 22903, by April 1.

April 1 is also the deadline for paper proposals for an adjunct session of AML at the Modern Language Association's 1982 annual meeting set for December in Los Angeles. MLA members are invited to send proposals to Eugene England, English Department, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602.

Both programs will welcome proposals that critique Mormon literature's current trends, probe historical influences,

analyze literary aspects of the scriptures, or deal with other elements of Mormonism's literature.

food for poland

Trustee and founder, Eugene England announces the organization of *Food for Poland*. Michael Novak is chairman of the board with Isaac Singer, Bruno Bettelheim, Norman Cousins, George Romney, Sargent Shriver and Elizabeth Moynahan as members of the board. Other trustees are Ronald Okey and Marcia Jolley.

A tax-exempt foundation, *Food for Poland* is concentrating on transporting milk for the children of Poland. One dollar provides milk for one child for one week; ten dollars provides milk for ten children. Please send contributions to P.O. Box 7280, University Station, Provo, Utah 84602.

A TEN-YEAR KALEIDOSCOPE

MARY L. BRADFORD

THE YOUNG SON of one of my friends was recently heard to say, “Mormon women all look alike. They have pretty faces and good teeth and most of them are overweight.” Just a sea of faces—or bodies—as seen by someone who doesn’t know us and so doesn’t understand. Jan Shipps, a well-known non-Mormon historian, has been studying Mormons for the past twenty years or so. She told me recently that she has experimented with so many different models in the attempt to understand that she has finally given up and decided that Mormons represent a unique system: she calls it a kaleidoscope. I think the image is a good one to apply to Mormon women—many-colored, shifting when you shake it, changing as you hold it to the light, yet keeping to a pattern. I too have been studying Mormon women in a way that leads me to paraphrase one of the teachings of Lowell L. Bennion, “The gospel of Jesus Christ is bigger than any one man’s perception of it.” I believe Mormon women are more diverse, more varied and more complicated than any one woman’s perception of them.

Ten years ago *Dialogue* published an issue on women edited by Claudia Bushman and Laurel Ulrich who went on from there to found a newspaper for Mormon women, *Exponent II*, and to publish a landmark collection of historical essays, *Mormon Sisters*. Since then both Claudia and Laurel have finished their PhDs, published books with national presses and obtained professorships at universities, while rearing a total of eleven children. With this anniversary issue they return, with a host of their sisters and some brothers, to help us look at the progress of the past decade.

In her introductory essay, Laurel reminisces about the burning issues of ten years ago and the difficulties in writing about them. She explains her own definition of "feminism," a term that has become a hiss and a byword among many Mormons. She also makes the subject of priesthood come alive, a subject on the back burner when the first "pink" issue was published, but discussed here by two other scholars, Nadine Hansen and Anthony Hutchinson. Laurel's essay builds a fitting bridge to other essays in theology, history and sociology, politics and the arts.

Ten years ago women were just beginning to find themselves through the arts; now many are established in visual, literary and kinetic forms—as shown by the paintings and drawings of Judith McConkie, the dance artistry of Maida Withers and the photographs of Robin Hammond. Linda Sillitoe and Meg Munk represent our ever-growing fictional prowess, while the continuing grace and strength of our poets is shown by Emma Lou Thayne, Loretta Sharp and Anita Tanner. The personal essay is becoming an art form, too, as women find their own voices, voices represented by Claudia Bushman, Eleanor Colton, the winners of the "Mormon Women Speak" essay contest, Ruth Furr's Mother's Day talk and our anonymous satire, "The Meeting."

This women's issue does not pretend to convey the total picture of the Mormon woman. As photographer Hammond puts it, "Beneath our Mormon facades we differ and agree in a multitude of ways." The women represented here reflect not only their growing commitment to their arts and professions but their continuing loyalty to family, friends and religion. Their pilgrimage is a proud one, and they seek to share it with their brothers who need not fear to accompany them. Mormon women can be safely trusted and loved.

For every woman highlighted in these pages, a hundred others could have been chosen.

THE COVER



I once took a short story course from Thomas Cheney at BYU. I remember his lecturing about ways to draw characters in a story. "If," he said, "you want to include a Mrs. Ryan and show her to be a cantankerous old woman, you can either say to your reader, 'Mrs. Ryan was a cantankerous old woman,' or you can simply put her into the plot and let her cantank." I think that remark bears upon the cover for the women's issue. The criteria for such a cover are: 1) It must be eye-catching and attention-getting. (The brilliant red will do that quite nicely.) 2) It must be somehow illustrative of the contents. And 3) It must address the idea that women have come some distance in the ten years since the first women's issue. An illustrative cover would leave no doubt as to the nature of the magazine, but it would fall short of the mark in giving Dialogue readers an indication that "we've come a long way, baby!" It is like the first method of informing us about Mrs. Ryan.

On the other hand, a cover like mine is sophisticated and highly technical. It is indeed eye-catching if for no other reason than its redness. It is motivated by an intellectual concept rather than a didactic aim and, in sum, it says (by its way of being) that Mormon women have come a long way since the craftsmy cover of ten years past. We are more sophisticated and professional and thoughtful. Rather than telling people that fact, we are demonstrating it—the second Mrs. Ryan approach.

—Judith McConkie

THE ARTIST

Judith McConkie, a native of Provo, Utah, set out to be an artist while an undergraduate at Brigham Young University. In her sophomore year she married James W. McConkie, then a freshman at BYU, and left art for “a more stable” career—teaching English (and some art) in Utah’s public schools. During fourteen years of marriage, she has shed rigid role expectations—at first she didn’t want to share the housework—while still identifying herself as a “traditional” wife and mother of three.

When James finished law school and entered his “stable” career (on a Congressional staff, in private practice, and through unsuccessful bids for Congress and for Utah’s attorney general) she flourished, studying printmaking under Eugene Frederick at the Corcoran School of Art in Washington, D.C., and later, after a stint at the University of Utah, under Wulf Barsch at BYU, where she teaches while completing an MFA in printmaking.

Her prints and illustrations have appeared in *Dialogue*, *Sunstone* and other publications and have been shown in the *Deseret News* annual show, the Utah ‘81 art show and the Virginia Art League quarterly exhibit.

Self-Portrait II, 22x20" (image size 18x16"), 1981, one-color lithograph with hand-drawn prisma-color over on Rives grey.

I've always admired Rembrandt's self-portraits—they mirror the progression of his soul while faithfully reflecting his domestic condition. This print started out very high-key—butterfly oranges and yellows on a white ground. Through the fall of 1980 upon the death of my father and other complications of that winter, it gradually metamorphosed.



Portrait of Lenin by Dmitri



Kelly in the Sky with Diamonds, 15x22", 1981, xerox transfer lithograph with embossment, tusche washes and three-color blend, bleed image on white Arches 88.

Kelly is three—with that capacity to manufacture friends for all occasions when real friends are not about. During the last elections an imaginary friend, often bidden to lunch, was called Reagan (a wonderful irony in our Democratic household). Others—animal or human—come and go, but "Lisa" is ubiquitous. With hair improvised from a towel, she is cosmopolitan. We always know she is with us when Kelly stands just so. "Judi," she says, stroking her terry-cloth locks. "I've come to visit."

Pyracantha, 18x24'', 1980, graphite pencil on Rives BFK.

This quip comes from the Goncourt brothers, art dealers in nineteenth century France who specialized in Japanese woodcuts:

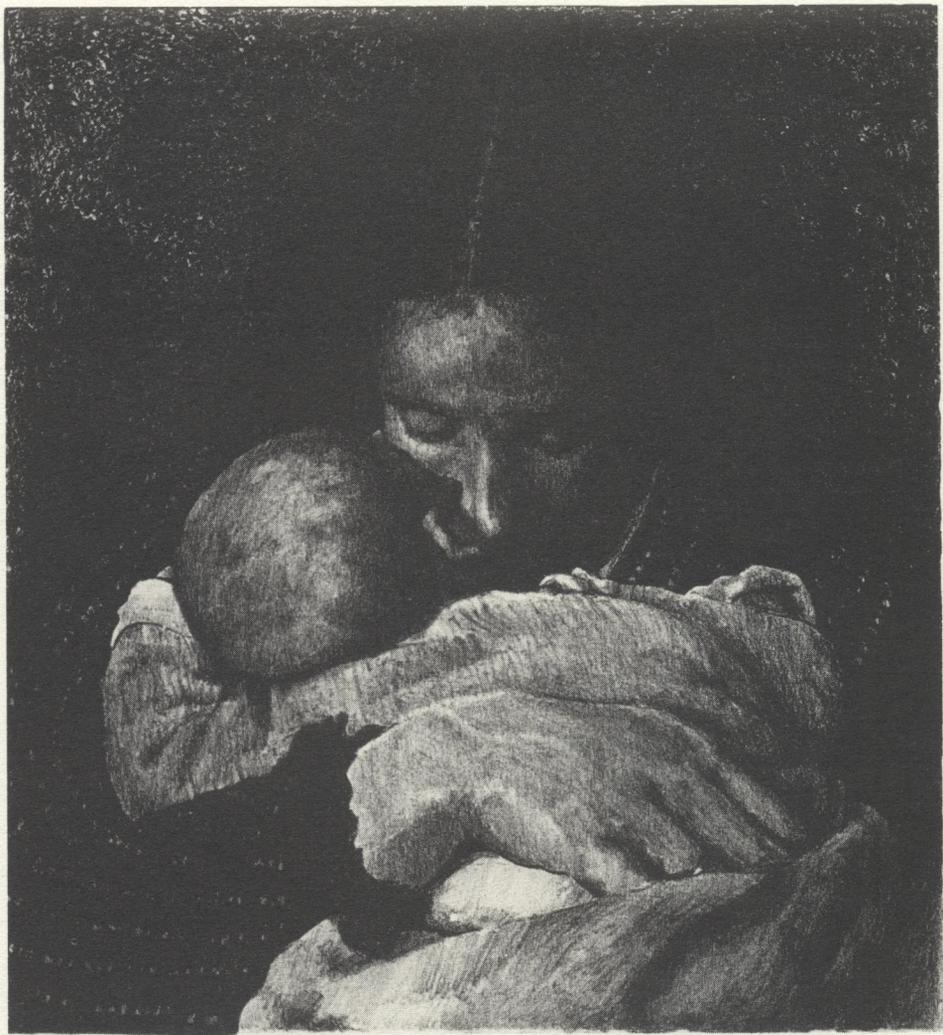
The taste for things Japanese! We were the first to have such a taste. It is now spreading to everything and everyone, even to idiots and middle-class women!

Early on in my studies I became one of this group of suspicious intellect by doing a suite of drawings and prints under the influence of Japanese art. My intent was to echo the nineteenth century Kacho-ga or nature woodcuts—exquisite prints that imbued the smallest, most common piece of nature with poetic dimensions.



Homage to Cassatt II, 10³/₄ x 10³/₄" (image size 5³/₄ x 5³/₄"), 1980, one-color lithograph on Arches buff.

I wanted to do a print about Mary Cassatt—her wonderful person and work. An immensely patriotic woman from Philadelphia, she lived nearly all her adult life in France. She was an impressionist who held herself aloof from the bourgeois art community. And her most famous works are paintings and prints of mothers and children (she never married). She was profoundly influenced by Degas—that “dreadful misogynist” and by the Japanese woodblock prints imported after 1866. Like mine, her life was a series of ironic anomalies.



ARTICLES AND ESSAYS

THE PINK DIALOGUE AND BEYOND

LAUREL THATCHER ULRICH

SOME TIME IN JUNE 1970, I invited a few friends to my house to chat about the then emerging women's movement. If I had known we were about to make history, I would have taken minutes or at least passed a roll around, but of course I didn't. All I have now to document that momentous gathering are memories. I remember Claudia Bushman sitting on a straight oak chair near my fireplace telling us about women's lives in the nineteenth century. Since she had just begun a doctoral program in history, she was our resident scholar. If we had a resident feminist, it was Judy Dushku, who came to that first meeting with a rhymed manifesto she had picked up at the university where she taught. We laughed at the poem's pungent satire, then pondered its attack on "living for others." "Isn't that what we are supposed to do?" someone said. Our potential for disagreement was obvious, yet on that bright morning we were too absorbed in the unfamiliar openness to care.

The talk streamed through the room like sunshine. None of us recognized that we were beginning a discussion that would continue for more than a decade. We only knew that it felt good to talk, and that we did not want to stop when it was time to go home. Before many weeks had passed, we were not only meeting regularly but had volunteered to put together a special issue of *Dialogue*. For us, publishing was a natural thing to do; most of our group had been involved in producing *A Beginner's Boston*, a Relief Society-sponsored guidebook that was already in its second edition. Meeting on weekday mornings to discuss forbidden issues was not natural, however. Like most Mormon women, we had more to do than to say. Our basements were full of wheat and our station wagons full of children, and if we screamed, we screamed in private. Yet our success with *A Beginner's Boston* had given us an astonishing belief in our own powers. Secure in the knowledge that our Relief

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Society had made a smashing success of a project which our ward elders quorum had turned down, we took on the most explosive issues in Mormonism.

When I say that we made history, I do not mean to imply that we were more forward looking, more courageous, or more intelligent than any other Latter-day Saint women. (Nor do I mean to suggest that we *solved* the problems we tackled.) By 1970 there must have been dozens of individuals and maybe even some groups who had begun to grapple with feminism, but by a fortunate combination of circumstances—our prior publishing experience, the particular mix of personalities and talents in Boston that year, and the providential appearance of *Dialogue's* editor, Eugene England, at the Bushman house in July—we were the first group of Mormon women to find our way to print. Gene certainly took a chance on us; I think we were all surprised at how easily he accepted our offer.

For me, the autumn and winter were both exhilarating and exhausting. I had moved to New Hampshire in September, yet I continued to drive the hour and a half to Boston once or twice a month for the *Dialogue* meetings, usually bringing a friend, Shirley Gee, with me. Shirley and I continued each discussion on the long ride home, missing stoplights and taking wrong turns as we simultaneously threaded our way through city traffic and through the tangle of emotions these meetings aroused.

Our group talked about Betty Friedan, Kate Millet, Rodney Turner and the latest Relief Society lessons; about birth control, working women, church politics and homosexuality; about things we knew well, like housework, and about things we knew not at all, like the relevance of feminism to working class women. In our most extravagant moments, we did not know whether to be angry at our mothers, at our husbands or at God. To our dismay we often found ourselves angry with each other. Claudia Bushman believes we took on the *Dialogue* project as a way of containing our conflicts. I am not sure that anyone knew how deep those conflicts were in those first weeks of summer when we made our offer to Gene. Whatever our motive, the decision to publish heightened the tension in our meetings.

By the following June, Claudia would write in a bitter mock preface to the now almost completed issue:

What do we learn from this experience? That our detractors were right when they felt that our meetings were evil? That the spirit of the Relief Society with its careful suppression of dangerous ideas is the only true model? That women cannot cooperate on a project without becoming shrill and combative?

At this point, wearied by wrangling, disagreements and hurt feelings (some of them my own) I'd have to admit that the group is a failure . . . The amiable and close sisterhood of the early days is still felt from time to time, but members feel defensive, require approval while refusing to give it and feel threatened by others whose lifestyle is dissimilar to their own.

Bit by tortured bit, the pink issue of *Dialogue* rose from this maelstrom of emerging consciousness.

I do not wish to exaggerate our struggles. A certain amount of turmoil is probably characteristic of any group project, as most Mormons know. Yet in a church context, both our pain and our achievement were different. We had called *ourselves* to this task. Without a confirming priesthood blessing and without any clear historical precedent, we had taken upon ourselves a project which would neither build buildings nor win converts and which by its very nature would disturb the equilibrium of our lives. That Claudia Bushman could refer to our issue, even with tongue in cheek, as the *Ladies Home Dialogue* says much about our insecurity and about our self-conscious conservatism at the time. That we persisted in publishing our work despite our conflicts has been for all of us a source of pride.

At the close of her introduction to the Summer 1971 *Dialogue*, Claudia wrote:

We offer our issue of *Ladies Home Dialogue* without apology. For a woman eager to do something unique and meaningful, but bogged down with the minutiae of everyday life, the pattern of another woman who has surmounted the same obstacles has real worth. Women have always been valued in the Church but not encouraged to say much. We hope that now and in the future more ladies will speak out and, what is more, be heard.

In assessing the gains of the past ten years, it is tempting to focus on the last phrase in Claudia's statement. Considering IWY, the excommunication of Sonia Johnson and the resurgence of the radical right, it is not at all certain that the "ladies" have been heard or ever will be heard in high places. I would prefer to focus on Claudia's invitation to the women themselves. As I think of the achievements of the past decade—the publication of *Mormon Sisters* and *Sister Saints*, the founding of *Exponent II*, the establishment of the BYU women's conferences, the securing of a feminist presence in *Dialogue* and *Sunstone* and in the Mormon History Association, the blossoming of women's fiction and poetry and especially the developing of an informal network of thinking Mormon women—I am warmed and enlivened.

The pink *Dialogue* was not responsible for this outpouring of women's voices, but it did begin it. In my manic moods, I like to remember that. If I could somehow figure out the exact date of our first meeting, I would propose it for historic recognition. A handsome brass plaque would look nice, set in the front lawn of my old house at 380 Dedham Street in Newton, somewhere between the peach tree and the birch. "Here," the inscription would read, "in this ordinary looking, gambrel-roofed house, the second generation of Mormon feminists was born."

A feminist is a person who believes in equality between the sexes, who recognizes discrimination against women and who is willing to work to overcome it. A *Mormon* feminist believes that these principles are compatible not only with the gospel of Jesus Christ but with the mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I can speak with authority for only one member of the second generation of Mormon feminists—myself—yet I am quite serious when I say that *for me* that first meeting in my living room in

Newton was historic. Although I had encountered “the problem with no name” long before Betty Friedan described it, I was ambivalent about solutions. By 1970, I had begun to make small adjustments in my own life, but I still believed that my deepest conflicts were personal rather than general. If I were a better person, I reasoned, a more Christ-like and less-neurotic person, I would not find it so difficult to “live for others.” Taking night classes was my strategy for keeping up my spirits so I could carry on the more important work at home. As my husband and I used to joke, “tuition is cheaper than a psychiatrist.”

In the past few weeks, I have been rereading some of the correspondence I saved from the year we were working on the pink *Dialogue*. As in going back to an old journal, I have been amused, dismayed, embarrassed and encouraged, recognizing my own shortcomings and at the same time discerning direction in what at the time seemed chaos. That meeting in Newton now seems like the beginning of a long journey outward from self-pity and self-condemnation. The year of talking helped. Seeing myself in others’ reactions, I was able to objectify my problems. I remember the amusement on Judy Dushku’s face during a meeting at Grethe Peterson’s house when I confessed my embarrassment at coming home one day and finding my husband sitting at the sewing machine mending his pants. I also remember one intense meeting at Bonnie Horne’s house when the whole group responded in an unbelieving chorus to my tearful proclamation that I would give up my children rather than than my courses. Identifying my own worst fears helped me climb over them.

Equally important to the development of my own feminism was the editing process itself. Since I had done pretty much what I wanted with *A Beginner’s Boston*, I was unprepared for the endless negotiations. Claudia and I made a good team. She took a hard line with the local sisters while I played gentle mediator; when it came time to deal with our editors in Los Angeles, we reversed roles. Much of my attention in the spring of 1971 was directed at Bob Rees, who took over as editor of *Dialogue* after we had already begun work on the women’s issue. We had expected little more than last minute copyediting from Bob and were dismayed at the criticism arriving in Boston weeks after we had sent our first material to California. Many of our problems at this stage can be attributed to tangled communications—having since been in a position to offend several guest editors of *Exponent II*, I can identify with him—yet certain key conflicts were probably inherent in the very process we were undertaking. Among these was our disagreement over Juanita Brooks’ piece, “I Married A Family.” Bob simply could not understand what we saw in it; I got tears in my eyes whenever I read it. He wanted us to tackle tough issues, like polygamy and the priesthood and was puzzled by our fascination with Juanita Brooks’ nursing baby and her curdled tomato soup.

Bob’s criticism hit at about the time our group was threatening to break asunder over a certain paragraph in one of the local essays. As I recall, the offending passage said something about middle-aged Mormon housewives spending their time “polishing the polish.” Since the author of this piece was newly married and childless, the matrons among us were incensed. Was she

implying that we—or our mothers—had wasted our lives? She was equally distressed, convinced that they were not attacking her paragraph so much as the liberated objectives she had outlined for her life. I still remember the conciliatory phone call I made to her after one explosive meeting. “Thank you,” she said coolly, “but I really must go. My husband has cooked dinner, and I’m afraid it’s getting cold.”

Tough issues indeed! How did Bob Rees expect us to write about polygamy or the priesthood when we couldn’t even write about housework without risking a schism? In our situation, Juanita Brooks’ self-revelations were of immense value. To us it really mattered that the foremost female scholar in Mormondom once hid her typewriter under the ironing.

Somewhere in all this uproar, a not-to-be named male member of *Dialogue*’s staff urged us not to produce “just another *Relief Society Magazine*.” I was furious. Like most college-educated women of my generation, I had been taught to laugh at ladies’ books (any self-respecting English major preferred Hawthorne and Melville to the “damned scribbling females” who were their competitors), but I had not yet learned to question the social structure or the attitudes that kept women out of the world of serious letters. The comment about the *Relief Society Magazine* hurt; for the first time I recognized a slur on women’s writing as a slur on me.

So it was that my first feelings of feminist outrage were directed not at “the Brethren” but at the kindly gentlemen at *Dialogue*. Who did they think they were, presuming to tell *us* what Mormon women should want? Without doubt, we were a difficult bunch to deal with. In the long run, Bob let us have our way on almost every point, though we were long convinced that some genie in Salt Lake City had conspired with the printer to present us our finished issue in pink.

I referred earlier to our self-conscious conservatism. I think this was feminist at base though we didn’t yet know it. Certainly we experienced the usual queasiness about countering the brethren, a genuine fear of being wrong, of being caught out of bounds—that worry eventually led some of our sisters to withdraw their support for the issue—yet there was affirmation as well as fear in our collective reluctance to abandon the housewife pose. As *Ladies Home Dialogue* we could speak out for all women, not just those who considered themselves liberated, and at the same time turn up our noses at the male intellectuals who were interested in being our guides.

In September 1972 Bob wrote to inform us that a number of the judges of the fourth annual *Dialogue* prize competition had cited our issue. “The whole was suffused with the religious culture of Mormonism, portrayed as a culture in tension between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (perhaps not the twenty-first).” So it was! It is no accident that the most fully developed personal statements in the issue were written by Jaroldeen Edwards, a mother of twelve, and Christine Durham, a law student with two children and a testimony. Jerry had earned her lyricism. Aside from admitting that she sometimes served her family canned spaghetti, she had fulfilled the highest expectations of traditional Mormon womanhood. Her life was “filled with being.” Chris’s voice was not lyrical, but it was equally clear. She had chosen

another path and was willing to defend it. The rest of us were, as Grethe Peterson put it, “somewhere in between.” The radicals were without children; the mothers were without jobs. As a consequence we skirted the subjective. Dixie Huefner polled the General Boards; Cheryl May wrote about a hypothetical sister named “Carol”; Judy Dushku (in a never-to-be-published article) erected an elaborate analogy to African tribal government, and I, despite a few self-revelations, hid behind humor. We were too conflicted—too untested—to share our lives with the world. A few of the single sisters talked but wouldn’t sign their names, and those who did sign refused to commit more than a page or two. Despite endless and anguished discussion, our article on housework became a medley of aphorisms, assembled anonymously, like a quilt.

The pink *Dialogue* proclaimed the value of women’s voices, yet in 1971 few Mormon women were really prepared to speak. Before we could write with any depth about Tough Issues, we had to do a little more experimenting with our own lives. We also had to learn more about our own place in history. I will never forget the exhilaration of walking in late to one of the *Dialogue* meetings and hearing Claudia reading the story of Ellis Shipp from Leonard Arrington’s newly submitted manuscript on women in church history. When she came to the fateful passage in which Ellis defies her husband to go back to medical school, the whole room cheered. “Yesterday you said that I should not go. I am going, going now!” With Ellis’s words Leonard let the pioneer generation of Mormon feminists out of the closet, and there was no putting them back.

In a year when Relief Society lessons, conference talks and *Church News* editorials routinely condemned working women, we proudly published on the back cover of our pink *Dialogue* this quotation from Brigham Young:

We believe that women are useful, not only to sweep houses, wash dishes, make beds, and raise babies, but they should stand behind the counter, study law or physic, or become good bookkeepers and be able to do the business in any counting house, and all this to enlarge their sphere of usefulness for the benefit of society at large. In following these things they but answer the design of their creation.

In time we would discover the complexity in Brigham’s statement (after all, a vacuum cleaner is *useful*), but for the moment it was enough to know that activities now condemned were once approved. Some eternal truths were only fifty or sixty years old.

Recognizing change in the Church, many of us were better able to deal with change in our own lives. In the autumn of 1971, I took a part-time teaching job at the University of New Hampshire and quit attending Wednesday morning Relief Society. I suppose I expected the sky to fall down. Instead, I was called to be Gospel Doctrine teacher in my ward. My new schedule (and perhaps a growing professional identity) had rescued me from Primary. I remember wondering why it had not happened ten years before when I was pining for just such a calling.

The pink *Dialogue* arrived in Boston just before Christmas 1971. Our group spent the early winter selling copies and modestly accepting the congratulations of friends (studiously ignoring the silence of some long-time associates in the Church). By the next fall we were off and running on a new project, a lecture series to be presented at the LDS Institute in Cambridge in the spring of 1973. Doing research for her talk, Susan Kohler discovered a complete set of *The Woman's Exponent* in the stacks at Harvard's Widener Library. Here indeed was a voice speaking to us from the dust! These women were saying things in the 1870s that we had only begun to think. In June of 1973 we celebrated the 103rd anniversary of the founding of the original *Exponent* and our own good fortune with a dinner at Grethe Peterson's house in Cambridge. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher of the church historian's office was Boston's first annual Exponent Day speaker. (Juanita Brooks was the second, and this June, Lavina Fielding Anderson will be the tenth.)

During the summer of 1973, my friends in Boston debated our next step. Should we revise and publish our lectures? Or found a women's newspaper? At a two-day retreat organized by Carrel Sheldon at the stake girls' camp in western Massachusetts, the fateful plans were laid. When the first issue of *Exponent II* appeared in July 1974, it proclaimed itself "the spiritual descendant of *The Woman's Exponent*," but it was the literal descendant of the pink *Dialogue*. In its pages that first Boston discussion circle has been revived and enlarged. Remembering our own early struggles, we refused from the first to promote any other platform than diversity. Our objective was to give Mormon women space to think and grow. Occasionally someone complains about the cheap paper we use. *The Exponent* crumbles and turns yellow, they say. Although I see the practical problem, I wonder if the symbolic value of newsprint isn't part of the paper's appeal. Most Mormon women have had too much indelible ink in their lives—lessons written seven years in advance, slogans engraved in gold. It is reassuring to know that some thoughts can be thrown out and thrown away.

By the time we published *Mormon Sisters* in 1976, we had already weathered the familiar conflicts. Two male scholars who read the essays in manuscript found them lame ("This book says nothing new"). Several of our local sisters found them threatening, and one would-be author withdrew her finished chapter because she found the tone of the whole too critical. Unable to find a publisher, we incorporated as Emmeline Press, did our own typing, paste-up and distribution, and at the end of the year paid ourselves a small royalty and a few cents an hour. By this time, the "Boston group" was hardly to be found in Boston. Our workers were spread from Pittsburgh to Provo, and though most of the chapters in *Mormon Sisters* had originated in our Institute forum, others had been completed by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, Jill Mulvay Derr, and Chris Rigby Arrington at the church historian's office in Salt Lake City.

Mormon Sisters, Sister Saints, Sisters and Little Saints, Elders and Sisters. Think of the outpouring of *sisters'* titles in the past five years! The promise of the pink *Dialogue* is being fulfilled. Mormon women are writing articles, essays, poems, stories and reviews. They are making films and producing

television documentaries. They are exploring history, literature, theology, politics and their own lives. Yet this new growth has not been achieved without pain. At the very moment Mormon women began to discover their lost history, they were swept up by history and thrust into the arena of politics by the Church's pronouncement on the ERA. Suddenly in 1978 Mormonism and feminism seemed incompatible.

Marilyn Warenski, whose *Patriarchs and Politics* was published by McGraw-Hill in 1978, was not the first to see the irony in our history, though she was the first to exploit the contrast between the pro-suffrage stance of the church in the 1890s and its anti-feminist stance in the 1970s. In both eras, she concluded, Mormon women had simply been manipulated by the brethren. Warenski wrote in response to IWY, but her book hit college bookstores just as Sonia Johnson was making her stand against the Church's position on the ERA. When Mormon history became a topic of conversation in corridors at the University of New Hampshire, when a local Unitarian Society invited me to speak then questioned me about IWY, when a country band refused to play at our ward square dance "because of your Church's attitude toward women," I knew that my adulthood as a Mormon feminist had begun.

About a year ago, Mary Bradford gave a writing workshop in Cambridge for the *Exponent II* staff and other interested persons. In one session she tried to use an essay I had written in the Summer 1974 *Dialogue* as an example of what to do or not to do, but she never got to her point because my friends were so busy discussing how my ideas on the subject had changed. I had insisted in that essay that I simply did not feel like a second-class citizen in the Church.

Precisely because it is blatantly and intransigently sexist, the priesthood gives me no pain. One need not be kind, wise, intelligent, published, or professionally committed to receive it—just over twelve and male. Thus it presumes difference, without superiority. I think of it as a secondary sex characteristic, like whiskers, something I can admire without struggling to attain.

At one level of consciousness, I *still* think of the priesthood as a secondary sex characteristic. In my psyche the whole concept is bound up with warm feelings and secure, predictable patterns. Growing up, I never resented seeing the males in our family rush out early on Sunday morning, smelling good, while I sat at the kitchen table drinking Postum. Nothing in my church service as an adult has made me feel deprived. Because I have always preferred teaching to administering anything, I have never missed being denied the opportunity for high church calling. In my iconoclastic moods, I suppose I have even enjoyed being outside the structure. I could carp without having to assume any real responsibility for change.

In the past five years, as the saying goes, my consciousness has been raised. IWY helped. It wasn't the issues that upset me so much as the spectacle of grown women rushing out to vote against proposals they had not read. The priesthood is "the principle of order in the kingdom," I had written in 1974. In 1977, I saw that order in a new and frightening light. I had always

believed in the importance of unity in the Church, but I thought that true unity was achieved “by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned.” Now, I was told, it was simply a matter of following one’s “file leader.” I don’t know where this term came from, but I don’t like it. For me, it conjures up images of marching infantry—or geese. Why should children of God waggle along in single file, each a paper cut-out of the other?

In November of 1979, a professor in my department at UNH stopped me on the way to class one day to ask why I wasn’t “out in Salt Lake City” defending my sister. I explained that excommunication is a local matter in the Mormon Church, that Sonia Johnson seemed to have run into some problems with her bishop, but that I was quite sure the Church would never let a woman be excommunicated for her political beliefs. At that point, I had scarcely heard of Sonia Johnson. I could no more imagine a bishop excommunicating a woman for supporting the ERA than I could imagine a ward organist flying a banner over stake conference proclaiming the support of Mother in Heaven. The next few weeks taught me a great deal about the Church and about myself. The Sunday after the excommunication a good friend and I found ourselves shouting at each other in the kitchen at Church. Why should we have to defend *either* Sonia or her bishop? Wasn’t the bitterness in Virginia enough, without having it spread through the Church? I resented the excommunication because I resented what it taught me about the priesthood. I was astonished to discover that an endowed woman could be tried at the ward level though her husband could not. Through the next months I identified with Sonia’s cause in the way I had once identified with the *Relief Society Magazine*, not because I liked it, but because I could recognize an attack on it as an attack on me. The vision of that all-male council trying a woman’s membership was more revealing than any of the rhetoric on either side.

In the shadow of such events I have gradually become aware of the immense contradictions within the Church as it struggles to stretch and grow with the times. Listening to General Conference never made me feel second-class; it has taken the new “Women’s Broadcasts” to do that. Hearing women’s voices for the first time over direct wire, I have been forced to look beyond the egalitarian partnership of my own home and the comfortable give and take of my ward to the blatant sexism of the general church structure.

I am glad that the General Relief Society President now conducts the women’s meetings, but I wonder why a member of First Presidency must preside. I am pleased to hear the voices of our female leaders, but I wonder why the first and last speakers and the most honored guests must be male. I am happy that the Apostles can sit with their wives in the tabernacle, but I wonder why, if these men are welcome at a women’s meeting, other men aren’t invited too, and I wonder why our women’s leaders cannot address all the membership of the Church in a general conference.

If my ward Relief Society president can conduct weekly meetings without the presence of the bishop, if the sisters of our ward can be trusted to instruct each other without the guiding hand of the elders, if women can pray in

sacrament meeting and preach to the ward as a whole, why must we be subjected to this humiliating parade of authority at the general church level? To sit in such a setting and hear President Kimball proclaim our equality or Elder Packer extoll our great circle of sisterhood is almost as disconcerting as to hear Elder Benson tell us our place is at home. The structure of the program and the assembly of dark suits on the platform proclaim our second-class status even when the words do not. Why, I wonder, must the women of the Church endure a women's meeting that is not a women's meeting at all?

There is not space here to explore the full range of these contradictions; they are evident for anyone who cares to look. That the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints simultaneously enlarges and diminishes women should hardly be surprising since it was born and has grown to maturity in a larger society which does the same. In my opinion, the solution is neither to keep quiet nor to picket the tabernacle. To do either is to accept the very heresy we want to overcome—the misguided notion that the Church is somehow to be equated with the men at the top. We must relearn an old lesson from Sunday School—the Church rests upon the testimonies of its individual members. I resist teachings and practices which diminish women not only because I am a feminist but because I am a Mormon.

As I have reconsidered the past ten years, I have come to believe that one reason I had difficulty recognizing discrimination in the Church was because I tended to confuse the spirit of the priesthood with its form. When President Kimball (in October 1979 General Priesthood Meeting) encouraged Latter-day Saint men to be "leader-servants" in their homes, he was teaching the spirit of priesthood. When Joseph Smith urged the brethren to cultivate "gentleness, meekness, and love unfeigned" he was speaking of the spirit of priesthood. When Christ knelt and washed the feet of his servants, he truly taught what it meant to be a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. I have felt the spirit of priesthood. I have seen men stay up at night with crying babies, sacrifice professional goals to pick apples at the welfare farm and give up football games to rake a widow's yard. I have seen restless men learn to sit and listen to people's problems, and I have seen ordinary men develop Christ-like qualities of love and compassion. In a very real sense, the priesthood has allowed men to develop the feminine side of their natures. In a world which assumed male dominance, Christ's priesthood turned the whole notion of dominance upside down, but in a world which is beginning to recognize equality between men and women, an anxious clinging to the form of the priesthood can only violate its spirit. It is the old story of Peter and the gentiles. Neither maleness nor Jewishness is essential.

A second reason I had difficulty recognizing discrimination in the Church grew from my own reluctance to assume power. "Men pass the sacrament and collect tithing," I wrote in 1974, "but they have no monopoly on spiritual gifts. Those are free to all who ask." Most of the time, to be perfectly honest, I wasn't asking. Me give a blessing? Me speak for God? If such a notion had suggested itself, I probably would have laughed. I had all the power I could handle already. For a long time, I approached my professional life in the same way. One of the reasons I found editing *A Beginner's Boston* so satisfying was

that someone else had *called* me to do the very thing I wanted to do—write. When it came to the next step, I had a great deal of trouble making up my mind. I argued with myself for months over the merits of entering a doctoral program. I thought I could probably do the work; I just had trouble believing the work was worth doing. How tedious, I thought. How dull. Me pass an oral exam? Me write a thesis? Surely I had more important things to do. As a former teacher reminded me, “Your talent is to delight.” I clung to my guidebook image just as Claudia and I had clung to our housewife image, out of affirmation and fear—affirmation for a whole wonderful world outside the range of male credentials, and fear at assuming power I had never associated with women.

For me, learning to question the present structure of the priesthood has been a positive as well as a negative experience. With feelings of anger and betrayal has come a new sense of responsibility; with recognition of discrimination has come renewed conviction of the essential message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I am convinced that an effective challenge to male dominance can only be built upon “principles of righteousness.” Trusting the spirit of the priesthood in the Church, Mormon women must recognize the potential for priesthood in themselves.

In the past few days I have been reading I Nephi 8–11. Although I love Richard Poll’s use of Book of Mormon symbols to characterize contemporary Latter-day Saints, I wonder if the Liahonas among us have been too willing to give up the imagery of Lehi’s dream. There are so many folks out there peddling maps to the Celestial Kingdom—“Straight and Narrow Path This Way! Grasp Iron Rod for Safe Trip!”—that it is easy to picture the Iron Rod as an unending railing of manuals, conference addresses, lessons and programs leading from baptism to the hereafter. I don’t think that is the message Lehi intended. In his story, the Iron Rod is discovered in an existential crisis, in darkness and mist. Those who grasp it find themselves, not in some final safe place, but with a new vision of the meaning of life, through having tasted the love of God.

Lehi’s story has particular relevance for Mormon feminists. As the wrenching struggles of the past five years have forced us to reach for the eternal and enduring amid the transient and temporary, we have felt and grasped the Iron Rod—sometimes to our own amazement. For so many years I have been a questioner, a protester, a letter writer; I had begun to think that words like *faith* and *testimony* belonged to other women, the ones who sat quietly in the congregation, meekly acknowledging the authority of the brethren. Gradually as I have found myself in front of a class or down on my knees or back at my typewriter after each new crisis, I have begun to realize that those words belong to me.

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” To care enough about the Church to want to see it better, to cherish the past without denying the future, to love and respect the brethren while recognizing their limitations, to be willing to speak when no one is listening—all of these require faith. Because I am not at all certain that the next decade will be any easier for Mormon women than the last, I offer these

personal experiences as a kind of testimony. Ten years ago, in a small gathering in a living room in Newton, a few women began to talk to each other. Struggling to produce an issue of *Dialogue*, they not only discovered the value of the personal voice, they learned the importance of accepting responsibility for their own perceptions. Risking conflict, they grew in their ability to serve. Opening themselves to others, they were unexpectedly strengthened in knowledge and in faith.



MORMON WOMEN AND THE STRUGGLE FOR DEFINITION

CAROL CORNWALL MADSEN

EVER SINCE I BEGAN STUDYING and writing about the life of Emmeline B. Wells, which will be a life's work for me, I have felt her steadying hand on my shoulder reminding me of the caution she once gave to those who shared their deepest confidences with one another:

How utterly unable we are, to judge one another, none of us being constituted exactly alike; how can we define each other's sentiments truly, how discriminate fairly and justly in those peculiarly nice points of distinction which are determined by the emotions agitating the human heart in its variety of phases, or under, perhaps, exceptional circumstances?¹

I am sensitive to that steadying hand as I attempt to identify and define what for an earlier generation of women identified and defined them as women—their relationship to the Church. The individual variables, including the level of commitment and the extent to which any individual allows an institution to affect his or her life, impede the process of generalizing. Moreover, the deeply personal nature of religious conviction almost defies a corporate assessment, yet I will attempt to do just that, hoping I will not misplace Emmeline's trust that private thoughts and feelings and the diversity of sentiment and opinion will not be misjudged or misinterpreted. The generalizations I will make cannot possibly be all inclusive. I hope they will be instructive.

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I would like to concentrate on three aspects of the religious life of early Mormon women which I think helped them define and understand themselves and their place within both the theology and the institution of Mormonism. All had their beginnings in the Nauvoo period when women emerged as a visible, collective entity through the organization of the Relief Society. Most members today are familiar with what has become a symbol of that organization's beginning—Joseph giving the key to women. According to Eliza R. Snow's minutes, Joseph turned the key *to* women, not in behalf of women, as we generally hear, and told them that knowledge and intelligence would flow down from that time forth. "This," he said, "would be the beginning of better days for this society,"²

For many, that symbolic gesture signaled the opening of a new dispensation for women, not only Mormon, but all women. Summing up this interpretation of those significant words, Apostle Orson F. Whitney explained:

[The Prophet Joseph] taught that the sisters were to act with the brethren, to stand side by side with them, and to enjoy the benefits and blessings of the priesthood, the delegated authority of God.

The lifting of the women of Zion to that plane, was the beginning of a work for the elevation of womankind throughout the world. "I have turned the key," said the Prophet on that historic occasion, and from what has since taken place we are justified in believing that the words were big with fate. . . .

The turning of the key by the Prophet of God, and the setting up in this Church, of women's organizations, [were] signs of a new era, one of those sunbursts of light that proclaim the dawning of a new dispensation.³

While the organization of the Relief Society in Nauvoo marked the beginning of a specified collective role for women in the Church, Mormon women in Kirtland had already informally organized to contribute in material ways to the building of the Kirtland Temple. Working in unity with the brethren of the Church in that venture and receiving the Prophet Joseph's commendation for the liberality of their services, many were understandably disappointed to learn that they would not be permitted to participate in the ordinances performed in that temple. That privilege would come later in Nauvoo.

The organization of the Relief Society came about from the same voluntary effort of women during the construction of the Nauvoo Temple. Sarah Kimball's suggestion that a female benevolent society be organized for this purpose, however, was met by Joseph's statement that he had something better for them. Explaining that the Church was not fully organized until the women were, he told them that "he was glad to have the opportunity of organizing the women, as a part of the priesthood belonged to them."⁴

From the beginning, Relief Society members perceived their organization as distinctive from the ladies aid and benevolent societies that were flourishing elsewhere. Formed "after the pattern of the priesthood," it had been "organized according to the law of heaven," explained John Taylor, present

at its inception.⁵ In an address to the sisters, Elder Reynolds Cahoon elaborated this idea: "There are many Benevolent Societies abroad designed to do good," he told them, "but not as this. Ours is according to the order of God, connected with the priesthood, according to the same good principles. Knowledge will grow out of it."⁶ Thus empowered, the women of Nauvoo assumed their assigned tasks to relieve the poor, watch over the morals of the community and save souls. Membership burgeoned.

In the years that followed the re-establishment of the Relief Society in the Salt Lake Valley, its potential as a parallel force with the priesthood in building the kingdom blossomed. Eliza R. Snow, by appointment of Brigham Young, directed the affairs of the society throughout the territory, organizing and assisting the various units to meet the needs of the community which Brigham Young had outlined. But while the impetus for organization this time originated with the Prophet, the women planned, developed and implemented many of the specific economic, community, educational and religious programs that came to be their share of kingdom building. There was wide latitude in their stewardship. While the broad purposes were the same for all, no two units functioned exactly alike, each devising a meeting schedule, course of study and economic and charitable programs to fit the needs and resources of its particular community. There was ample room for innovation and leadership on both the local and general level in the initial stages of the Relief Society.

Conflicts between Relief Society programs and ward plans were to be resolved according to the bishop's wishes. "We will do as we are directed by the priesthood," Eliza told one inquiring Relief Society president, this message becoming her major theme.⁷ Nevertheless, there were resources which women could employ in their need for cooperation. As Eliza reminded a Relief Society in Cache Valley, "We are accredited with great persuasive powers and we can use them on the Brethren."⁸

With the exception of Emma Smith, Eliza R. Snow was unique among women leaders in the Church. She not only held the position of "Presidentess of all Mormon women's organizations," indeed of all Mormon women, she was also the wife of the living prophet. As Maureen Beecher has described, she was the "chief disseminator of the religion to the women of the Church," and conversely, we might add, their advocate with the Prophet. No minutes exist of the conferences between Eliza and Brigham, but it is certain that Eliza's respect for the priesthood and her obedience to authority did not deter her from vigorously representing the interests of the women of Zion in that unique council of two. Always announcing new assignments or programs as having been advised or suggested by President Young (though we cannot be certain who originated them), she was able, by this means, to instruct women to yield the same obedience to authority she exemplified and also to provide an authoritative base for the programs she directed.

The interconnection of priesthood and Relief Society first enunciated by the Prophet Joseph was continually reinforced by later church presidents. "Let male and female operate together in the one great common cause," John

Taylor told a conference audience.⁹ Wilford Woodruff confirmed this mutual labor: “The responsibilities of building up this kingdom rest alike upon the man and the woman.”¹⁰ Lorenzo Snow exhorted the sisters to take an interest in their societies for they were “of great importance. Without them,” he repeated, “the Church could not be fully organized.”¹¹ Presiding Bishop Edward Hunter expanded the words of Joseph to the sisters. “They have saved much suffering,” he said, “and have been a great help to the bishops. They have the priesthood—a portion of the priesthood rests upon the sisters.”¹² The Relief Society did not consider itself just a ladies’ auxiliary.

Through it the women of the Church had been given a vehicle by which their voices could be heard, their capabilities utilized, their contributions valued.

In the process of organizing the women into the structure of the Church, Joseph opened other significant avenues of participation. At the 28 April 1842 meeting, he affirmed their right to use spiritual gifts, which were freely exercised in the early days of the Church. The gift of tongues had rested on many of the sisters of the Church since its beginning, and others had testified to receiving the power to rebuke evil spirits and to prophesy. At issue at this particular meeting in Nauvoo was the right of women to lay on hands for the purpose of healing. Some were ordained for this purpose, Joseph explained to the Relief Society women, but, he assured them, anybody could do it who had the faith or if the sick had the faith to be healed by that administration.¹³ These were gifts of the spirit, he told them, designated to follow all believers. They were gifts of faith given to the faithful, irrespective of gender or age. One member of the General Retrenchment Association described her own healing at the hands of her young son whose “perfect and pure faith in the power and mercies of God had claimed for her the blessings which he asked in childish simplicity and trust.”¹⁴

Again, Eliza was to lead as the practice of blessing one another through laying on of hands and washing and anointing developed among the sisters. She not only encouraged the use of these spiritual activities but taught women the proper procedure. In a directive to the Relief Society in 1884 she reminded the sisters that no special setting apart was necessary for these administrations. “Any and all sisters,” she said,

who honor their holy covenants, not only have the right, but should feel it a duty, whenever called upon, to administer to our sisters in these ordinances; and we testify that when administered and received in faith and humility they are accompanied with almighty power.¹⁵

While she connected their use to those who had received the temple endowment, President Joseph F. Smith in 1914 substantiated Joseph’s original counsel that such administrations could be exercised by all members of the household of faith.¹⁶

Minutes of the women’s organizations (Relief Society, YWMIA, and Primary), personal diaries and letters attest to the efficacy of these spiritual

activities of the women, not only in healing the sick and bringing comfort and solace to women in childbirth but in strengthening the spiritual fibre of all who participated in them. Relief Society testimony meetings were punctuated with demonstrations of the gift of tongues and accounts of healings by the administration of sisters. Washing and anointing a woman about to be confined for childbirth became one of the most significant of these rituals, encouraged by their leaders and sought after by the sisters themselves. At a time when women continually faced the crushing burden of infant death as they gave birth year after year—or even their own death—such administrations by those who knew precisely the pangs of that burden had a deep and personal meaning. The women must have experienced a unique transmittal of energizing spiritual strength and support as they felt the knowing and comforting hands of kindred souls placed upon them. These religious practices became a source of spiritual bonding among the sisters of the Church. Looking back on a lifetime of sharing such experiences with other women, Emmeline Wells recalled the “beautiful little meetings” which the sisters often held in her home. She remembered the glorious testimonies born by Sister Isabella Horne and Eliza Snow . . . and the wonderful singing of Mother Elizabeth Ann Whitney [in tongues] with its beautiful interpretation by Aunt Zina.” These were women, she told a new generation of Mormon sisters, “whom I loved as much as if bound by kindred ties, closer, perhaps, because our faith and work were so in tune with our everyday life.”¹⁷ Access to this kind of spiritual power and union by both women and men gave meaning to the concept of building a community of Saints.

It was in the temple experience that Mormon women of the early Church most fully defined themselves and their place in both the temporal and eternal kingdom. Here they learned their relationship to priesthood in very personal and tangible ways, particularly those who received all of the temple ordinances. Joseph recorded, before meeting with the Relief Society at its sixth meeting, that he was going to give a lecture to the sisters on the priesthood, showing them how they would come in possession of its gifts, privileges and blessings. Subsequent events indicate that he intended to prepare them, just as he had the brethren, to receive the fullness of the gospel, or the priesthood ordinances that were to be administered in the temple. Conscious that his time was limited, he introduced these ordinances to a selected group of men and later women before the completion of the Nauvoo Temple. When it was completed many of those who had received their endowment beforehand became the first temple officiators. “Woman,” Emmeline B. Wells remembered, “was called upon to take her part in administering therein, officiating in the character of priestess.”¹⁸ This term was consistently applied to women who performed temple service. Eliza R. Snow, Zina D.H. Young and Bathsheba W. Smith, who served, each in her own time, simultaneously as general president of the Relief Society and as temple matron (using a contemporary term) were frequently referred to as Presiding High Priestesses.

Once again women and men were called to unite their efforts in another aspect—the most important one—of their religious life. “Our sisters should

be prepared to take their position in Zion," John Taylor announced at a Relief Society conference. "They are really one with us, and when the brethren go into the temples to officiate for the males, the sisters will go for the females; we operate together for the good of the whole . . . all acting mutually, through the ordinances of the Gospel, as saviours upon Mount Zion."¹⁹

I believe it is impossible to overestimate the significance of temple work in the lives of early Mormon women. As both initiates and officiators they knew they were participating in the essential priesthood ordinances of the gospel in the same manner as their husbands, their fathers or their brothers. Moreover, they knew it was a universal work for both the living and the dead, and the appellation, "Saviours on Mount Zion," was not just a poetic phrase. Nor was it mere hyperbole in the words of welcome given by the Kanab Relief Society officers when Eliza R. Snow and Zina D.H. Young visited:

We welcome sisters Eliza and Zina as our Elect Lady and her counselor, and as presidents of all the feminine portion of the human race, although comparatively few recognize their right to this authority. Yet, we know they have been set apart as leading priestesses of this dispensation. As such we honor them.²⁰

Besides bringing women and men together to work as partners in performing priesthood ordinances, the temple also underscored their interdependence in the eternal plan. Marriage was an essential saving ordinance and through marriage women had access to priesthood. James E. Talmage, author of *House of the Lord*, explains:

It is a precept of the Church that women of the Church share the authority of the priesthood with their husbands, actual or prospective; and therefore women, whether taking the endowment for themselves or for the dead, are not ordained to specific rank in the priesthood. Nevertheless, there is no grade, rank, or phase of the temple endowment to which women are not eligible on an equality with man.²¹

Lucy Meserve Smith, wife of apostle George A. Smith, was one who expressed very clearly this perception of shared priesthood. Writing of a particularly frightful experience in which she felt the tangible presence of evil spirits, she recalled that

the holy spirit said to me they can do no harm where the name of Jesus is used with authority. I immediately rebuked them in [that name] and also by virtue of the Holy Priesthood conferred upon me in common with my companion in the Temple of our God.²²

In a patriarchal blessing given to her at the death of her husband, Zina Y. Williams was also reminded of the particular power given to her in the Temple: "These blessings are yours, the blessings and the power according to the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood, you received in your endowments. . . ."²³

Though the question of women and priesthood evoked a great deal of semantic volleying over whether they held or shared it, the effect of the precept, expressed by Talmage, was the encouragement by church leaders for women and men to use it jointly in blessing or administering to their children—or to others—as occasion arose. And they did. In 1873, for example, George A. Smith, then a member of the first presidency, travelled with a party of Mormons, including Lorenzo Snow, his sister Eliza, Feramor Little and others, to the Holy Land. At a stopover in Bologna, Italy, he felt ill. “I became fatigued and dizzy,” he wrote in his diary. “I got into a carriage and returned to the hotel. On arriving at the hotel I found myself so unwell that I requested Bros. Snow and Little and Sister Eliza to lay hands on me.”²⁴ Children were encouraged to cultivate enough faith to be able, when afflicted, to call upon either their parents or the elders to lay hands upon them that they might recover.²⁵

The ambivalence that seemed to follow the question of women and priesthood is noticeably evident in an answer Joseph F. Smith gave in 1907 in the *Improvement Era* to a question on the subject. No, he said, women do not hold the priesthood. Nevertheless, he continued, “if a woman is requested to lay hands on the sick with her husband or with any other officer holding the Melchizedek Priesthood, she may do so with perfect propriety.”

It is no uncommon thing for a man and wife unitedly to administer to their children, and the husband being mouth, he may properly say out of courtesy, “By authority of the holy priesthood in us vested.”²⁶

While the debate went on around them concerning their precise relationship to priesthood, women went about with a knowledge that they did indeed have a claimable right, not just to its blessings but also to its gifts and privileges, as Joseph had promised. In their homes it was exercised jointly with their husbands, or alone in their husband’s absence, in behalf of themselves, their families and often friends or neighbors. In their church activities it bolstered the authority delegated to them to officiate in their various callings. In the temple it was utilized directly by women as they administered the priesthood ordinances to other women.

Thus through the sealing ordinances of the temple, men and women became not only heirs to the blessings and privileges of priesthood but candidates for godhood, ultimately, according to Talmage, “administering in their respective stations, seeing and understanding alike, and cooperating to the full in the government of their family kingdom.” Conscious of the inequities that unbalanced the relationships of men and women in this life, he added, “Then shall woman be recompensed in rich measure for all the injustice that womanhood has endured in mortality.”²⁷

So it was that from their membership in the Relief Society which they understood to be an essential part of church organization, functioning alongside priesthood in implementing and supervising temporal concerns, from their participation in spiritual affairs through the exercise of spiritual gifts and their share in the uses of priesthood, and especially from the promise of

godhood which awaited the faithful man and woman only together, Mormon women felt themselves to be an integral, viable force within the kingdom. Allowing for the extravagance of the zealot, and Eliza R. Snow was certainly that, there *was* a basis for her claim that Mormon women “occupied a more important position than was occupied by any other woman on earth, . . . associated as they are with apostles and prophets, sharing with them in the gifts and powers of the holy priesthood, and participating in those sacred ordinances which would prepare them to once more dwell in the presence of the Holy Ones.”²⁸ This is the legacy of Mormon women.

NOTES

- ¹Blanche Beechwood, “About Letter Writing,” *Woman’s Exponent* 4 (1 July 1875):24.
- ²Minutes of the Nauvoo Female Relief Society, 28 April 1842, typescript copy, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter cited CA), p. 32.
- ³*Young Woman’s Journal* 17 (July 1906):295–96. ⁴*Woman’s Exponent* 7 (1 July 1878):18.
- ⁵Relief Society Minutes, 17 March 1842, p. 8.
- ⁶Relief Society Minutes, 13 August 1843, p. 91.
- ⁷Eliza R. Snow to Wilmarth East, 23 April 1883, Eliza R. Snow Papers, CA.
- ⁸Smithfield Ward, Cache Stake, Relief Society Minutes, 1868–78, 12 May 1878, p. 486, ms, CA.
- ⁹*Journal of Discourses* 19 (21 October 1877): 246. ¹⁰*Woman’s Exponent* 9 (15 July 1880):31.
- ¹¹Box Elder Stake Relief Society Minutes, 1875–1884, 10 December 1876, ms, CA.
- ¹²*Woman’s Exponent* 6 (1 December 1877):102.
- ¹³Relief Society Minutes, 28 April 1842, p. 29.
- ¹⁴*Woman’s Exponent* 1 (15 February 1873):138.
- ¹⁵*Woman’s Exponent* 13 (15 September 1884):91, and General Relief Society Handbook, 1902.
- ¹⁶First Presidency (Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, Charles W. Penrose) to Presidents of Stakes and Bishops of Wards, 3 October 1914, ms. CA.
- ¹⁷*Relief Society Magazine* 3 (February 1916):68.
- ¹⁸Emmeline B. Wells, “Pen Sketch of an Illustrious Woman,” *Woman’s Exponent* 9 (15 October 1880):74.
- ¹⁹*Woman’s Exponent* 8 (1 June 1879):2. ²⁰*Woman’s Exponent* 9 (1 April 1881):165.
- ²¹James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1912), p. 94.
- ²²*Historical Record of Lucy M. Smith*, ms, CA, p. 52. (Record begins: “Salt Lake City June 12th 1889 Historical Sketches of My Great Grandfather.”)
- ²³Zina Y. Card Papers, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.
- ²⁴George A. Smith, Diary, 9 January 1873, holograph, CA.
- ²⁵*Woman’s Exponent* 1 (15 April 1873):173. ²⁶*Improvement Era* 10 (February 1907):308.
- ²⁷“The Eternity of Sex,” *Young Woman’s Journal* 25 (October 1914):602–603.
- ²⁸“Position and Duties,” *Woman’s Exponent* 3 (15 July 1874):28.

WOMEN AND PRIESTHOOD

NADINE HANSEN

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 reponse 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* on "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 we rethink our traditional place in the 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.

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The early Christian church had its beginnings in a culture that 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, were not allowed to be witnesses in court, were denied education and were 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 the 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 community were permitted a broader participation than we generally acknowledge today. In fact, some New Testament passages refer to women in terms which indicate that the women 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 that we can find precedents for a broader religious participation for women. The Old Testament also tells us of women who rose to prominence, despite the obstacles they faced as women in a culture which restricted them in many serious ways.⁷ Deborah and Huldah were prophetesses (Judges 4, 2 Kings 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 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 have been 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 what is not "proper" behavior for women.

It should be noted that some of the more restrictive passages about women appear in I 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 writings. 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 (I Cor. 7:8–9), on women speaking and teaching in church (I Cor. 14:34–35, I Tim. 2:11–12), and on women wearing headcoverings while praying or prophesying (I Cor. 11:5). On the other hand, we have uncompromisingly accepted the idea of women's subordinate place in marriage (Eph. 5:22–24, I 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 (I Tim. 2:13, I Cor. 11:7, 9), and that she was the first to "fall," (I Tim. 2:14) thereby causing all women to be required 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 ordering of the 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 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 which was both necessary and desirable for the progress of Adam and Eve and the entire human family, while simultaneously viewing it as a transgression which merited 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 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 or not they would agree with Orson Pratt. But until we begin to see our ultimate destiny as a genuine 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 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. But the rising expectations of women today are causing many of us to re-examine our feelings about the strict role assignments that have

circumscribed us, compartmentalized us, 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 which have been made by men, but they are given little opportunity to influence those decisions before they are made. Often these decisions have a very great impact on women, as is the case when undertakings involving large time or financial commitments are openly discussed in priesthood meeting, yet women are generally not 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. Yet even though 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 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 much 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 counselling from a spiritual leader had to be counselled 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. But somehow it is much 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 to be 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 And although 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 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 to be a great gift from God, and the right to bear the priesthood to be 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.

NOTES

¹“Mormonism Enters a New Era,” *Time*, Vol. 112 (August 7, 1978), p. 56.

²Claudia L. Bushman, “Exponent II Is Born,” *Exponent II*, Vol. 1 (July, 1974), p. 2.

³This 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 September-October, 1980 issue of *Sunstone*) observed that 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 that year (1980) was the first year in which there were several poems submitted about Mother in Heaven. Linda Sillitoe has made a similar observation. In an article about Mormon women’s poetry Sillitoe wrote, “I suspect that more poems to or about our Mother in Heaven have been 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.’” (See Linda Sillitoe, “New Voices, New Songs: Contemporary Poems by Mormon Women,” *Dialogue*, Vol. 13 (Winter, 1980), p. 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, Vol. 16, p. 626. See also Elisabeth M. Tetlow, *Women and Ministry in the New Testament*, New York: Paulist Press, 1980, pp. 20–24.

⁵Judith Hauptman, "Images of Women in the Talmud," *Religion and Sexism*, Rosemary Radford Ruether, ed., New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974, p. 196. Hauptman argues that this prayer should not arouse the feminist ire it has provoked. She says that 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.

⁶The 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*, Vol. 41, 1979, pp. 612–13. The Task Force was formed by the Executive Board "to study and report on the Role of Women in Early Christianity.

⁷Included in the restrictions placed upon women in the Old Testament were those which were imposed on them 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 (Exo. 20: 17).

⁸*Old Testament Part I—Gospel Doctrine Teachers Supplement*, Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980, p. 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 that she was a prophetess.

⁹The 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.

¹⁰Many 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*, Charles M. Laymon, ed., Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971, pp. 834–5 and p. 883.

¹¹Most biblical scholars see the two creation stories as stories which were 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*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1975 (Third Edition), pp. 211–213 and 426–436. 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.

¹²B.H. Roberts, however, speculated that there had actually been two creations on earth. This was tied to his theory that there were pre-Adamites, who were destroyed before Adam and Eve were placed on the earth. See Richard Sherlock, "The Roberts/Smith/Talmage Affair," *Dialogue*, Vol. XIII, No. 3 (Fall, 1980), pp. 65–6.

¹³*Woman*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979, p. 80.

¹⁴*ibid.*, p. 83.

¹⁵*ibid.*

¹⁶John A. Widtsoe, *Rational Theology as Taught by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965, p. 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."

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

¹⁸Second Article of Faith.

¹⁹For 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," *The Ensign*, Vol. 9 (November 1979), p. 102.

²⁰Cited in Linda Wilcox, *op. cit.*, p. 14. From Orson Pratt, *The Seer* 1 (October 1853), p. 159.

²¹Many 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, p. 138–9.

²²D. & C. Official Declaration 2.

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

²⁴Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith, The First Mormon*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977, p. 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."

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

²⁶Brigham 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, p. 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, p. 106 and in John L. Lund, *The Church and the Negro*, 1967, pp. 45–49.

WOMEN AND ORDINATION: INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLICAL CONTEXT

ANTHONY A. HUTCHINSON

THE QUESTION of whether worthy women could be or ought to be ordained to the LDS priesthood has not, until recently, been considered seriously in the LDS community. As recently as 1979, Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton wrote, "There are no great pressures from Latter-day Saints for priesthood for women, despite similar demands in other contemporary faiths."¹ Normal LDS treatments of the question really did not address the issue head on, but rather argued for general subordination of women on various grounds, not the least of which was the Church's policy of excluding women from priesthood ordination itself.²

A major reason for this is that recent questions about priesthood ordination for women were first publicly formulated in non-LDS Christian communities, particularly the Anglican/Episcopal tradition, and more recently, in Roman Catholicism.³ To some Mormons this tainted the question with somehow being "of the world." In addition, the unique sociological and theological dynamics of priesthood in Mormonism require that the question be phrased in somewhat different terms than it has been in Anglicanism or Roman Catholicism.⁴ Whereas these traditions distinguish between a common priesthood possessed by all Christians by virtue of their baptism and an ordained or hierarchial priesthood,⁵ normally called the priestly ministry, the LDS priesthood is considerably "laicized," and ordination is not restricted to a trained and specialized elite class of ministers.⁶ Consequently, the discussion, started in the context of a non-LDS theology of priesthood and church, has not been picked up quickly by Latter-day Saints. And yet, significantly,

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some Latter-day Saints are raising the question of the ordination of women. Excommunication resulting from the unauthorized ordination of a woman has occurred. The topic is discussed more and more openly.⁷

After noting some of my working assumptions, I shall briefly give some background from the Old Testament on this subject, then concentrate on insights the New Testament offers.

I deliberately avoid attempting a study of the history of Mormon policy *per se* because I am by training a biblical theologian and exegete, not an LDS historian. As much remains to be learned about the theological antecedents as about the historical precedents. Careless use of the Bible, particularly certain passages from the Pauline corpus, has bedeviled the discussion of this question by LDS systematic theologians and produced confusion. Prooftexts are often adduced by adherents of both sides in the debate. A recitation here of some of the widely accepted consensus of modern New Testament scholarship about these texts and their place on the general cultural and theological horizon of the New Testament might help alleviate the confusion about what God's revelation to the primitive Christian church has to say on this matter. (Excellent studies have been published on this topic. These should be read by anyone interested in the issue because I can attempt no more than a brief summary and application of this material.)⁸

DESCRIPTIVE BIBLICAL APPROACH: SOME ASSUMPTIONS

Here are some of the major working assumptions behind my methodology that naturally grow out of a rationally considered LDS faith that do much to support and enhance the real heart and life of our religion.⁹

First, I believe firmly that the Bible has a normative value in Mormonism, just as I believe that LDS scripture and the teachings of the living prophets do. I do not, however, consider this normative value in fundamentalist terms that would make biblical or any particular modern LDS formulations inerrant or an absolute rule of faith. To deny the normative value of the Bible, either through the bad transmission or translation argument, or the claim that current revelation somehow annuls and invalidates all previous revelation, may well cut the Church off from God's revelation to ancient Israel and the primitive Christian church, as well as from its own past. It will also seriously cripple our ability to understand the real contribution which LDS revelation offers to the religious traditions historically descended from the biblical faith. Such a denial, though current in certain elements of the Mormon community, is rooted deeply in fundamentalist concern and, I believe, betrays the very real experience the LDS people have had with divine revelation in 150 years of Church life.¹⁰

Second, I believe that the historical-critical method of scriptural study provides the tools best suited to the task of identifying God's word to the ancients and the meanings infused into these texts by inspired human authors of scripture. This method ideally combines the exacting canons and tools of responsible philology with the empathy of a faith in the inspired nature of these texts. In so doing, it attempts to discriminate between the original

inspired sense of scripture and the rich surplus of meaning laid upon scripture by more recent people inspired by God, often themselves authors of additional scripture. Just as the “new Mormon history” is essential to a careful understanding of our own growth as a people, so is critical biblical scholarship necessary for an accurate understanding of the Bible in its original meaning and inspiration.

Third, one should always remember that the Bible is not a manual of doctrine, a blueprint for the Church, or a code of eternal laws and absolute principles. Rather, it is a record of human experience with the living God, a God who acts as well as speaks. It phrases and expresses this experience and the human values and beliefs concomitant to that experience in history in terms conditioned and colored by the historical, linguistic and cultural milieu in which the inspired human authors wrote. Revelation comes to human beings “in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understand” (D&C 1:24). As a result, when we look to the Bible in our discussion about the ordination of women, we should never think we are finding in its pages absolute standards for all time when in fact we are seeing examples of how the people of God have formulated their faith and values in the past, within the context of their own cultures and the specific questions with which they were struggling.

Fourth, I make a specific caution regarding the limitations circumscribing any attempt in adducing New Testament evidence for use in a modern theological discussion. The New Testament does not give us a complete picture of earliest Christian faith and church practices. Not only is the New Testament evidence incomplete, but it is colored enormously by the occasion and circumstances surrounding the authorship of its books. It is colored by the theological intentions of the second and third generation Christians who committed the early Christian tradition to paper in the gospels; it is colored by the specific polemical situations in which the apostle Paul found himself in writing his epistles. Extreme care must be exercised in using this fragmentary and difficult evidence. Particular care must be taken to allow the New Testament to speak for itself and scrupulously to avoid any interpretation of the texts which relies on associations of ideas not found in the texts themselves. Special care should be taken to avoid imposing categories of thought upon the New Testament which reflect later theological development whether mainstream Christian or LDS. It is only thus that the limited evidence of the New Testament can have any value in the modern discussion.

WOMEN, PRIESTHOOD AND PROPHECY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Clearly, Old Testament culture was androcentric and generally patriarchal. Women were typically disqualified from active roles in political leadership, and although there is no single Old Testament text explicitly forbidding women priests, it is clear that women were excluded from major roles in the Yahwistic Temple cult. Yet this fact does not force us to conclude that the Old

Testament authenticates a modern policy of excluding women from ordination, or even teaches *ipso facto* women's subordination to men. On the contrary, the condition of women was more advanced in ancient Israel than in contemporary Canaanite culture.¹¹ The fertility myths and cultic prostitution of Canaanite religion placed value upon women only as means for sexual gratification and the production of children. In contrast to this, the creation narratives of Genesis 1-3 teach clearly the dignity of all human beings and the divine image found in both men and women.

It is important to note that the priestly disqualification was not a simple expression of a misogynistic belief in the inferiority of women. Rather, it was related to two central elements of Old Testament religion, one ideological and one historical. Ideologically, the Israelites held an entire world view and symbolic structuring of reality in which non-urinary issues from the genitalia were considered to be ritual defilements (see esp. Leviticus 15). Therefore, menstrual flow and post partum hemorrhaging, as well as semen, were defilements. Thus, because of a simple difference between the sexual biology of men and women, a serious handicap in women's participation in the cult resulted. The entire world view of which this complex of ideas is an organic part is no longer wholly available to the consciousness of the modern world,¹² and transcends the single issue of women and their societal role. Historically, Israelite polemic against the Canaanite fertility cult, with its use of sacred prostitutes, drew into suspicion and question any participation of women in the ritual. It is important to note that both of these elements in ancient Judaism do not obtain at all in modern Mormonism.

Several Old Testament references to women and the prophetic gift warrant our attention. The basic concept of "prophet" in the Old Testament involves someone filled with Yahweh's spirit who speaks Yahweh's word.¹³ The Old Testament does not normally associate the idea of "priesthood" with the idea of "prophet," except, perhaps, in the charter narratives that trace the Levitical and Aaronic classes back to God's revelation to the prophet *par excellence*, Moses, as well as the Book of Ezekiel, and some passing references in I Samuel to an early oracular, but not explicitly prophetic, function of priests (I Sam. 14:36-42; 23:9-11; 30:7-8). Indeed, the Old Testament never even hints that priesthood is a requirement or prerequisite for prophecy.

Of interest to our discussion is the fact that three women in the Old Testament are mentioned by name and endorsed explicitly with the term "prophetess" (*nəbî'â*).¹⁴ These are Miriam (Exod. 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4-5), and Huldah (II Kings 22:14). In Old Testament categories, there is no theoretical distinction between the authority and religious office of a woman like Deborah or Huldah and a man like Elisha. This is not to say that the Old Testament has examples of women who, possessing the prophetic gift, held the "priesthood." This would be a serious misuse of the texts. However, in any LDS doctrinal formulation which takes these texts into account, one must remember that the Old Testament concept of "prophet" is adapted and accommodated in the LDS scriptures. Thus, in D & C 107:40-54, many Old Testament figures, conceived here as prophetic, are associated with the LDS Melchizedek Priesthood. A consistent accommodation of these texts in LDS usage

would point to some understanding of priesthood authority for these women, though clearly such an understanding is not implied by the biblical text. A similar accommodation could be applied to Deborah, who is also portrayed as a “judge” in Israel (Judges 4:5). Again, the point is not that the Old Testament teaches that Deborah held the priesthood, for in the Old Testament’s eyes the function of “judge” has little to do with “priesthood.” but here again, an image normally considered an ordained office in the LDS church is applied to a woman in the Old Testament.

PRIESTHOOD AND MINISTRIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

“Priesthood” is not a term the New Testament uses to describe specific ministries and roles of service to be exercised by the individual Christian. More correctly one speaks of “ministries” in the New Testament, rather than “priesthood,” if one remains faithful to New Testament categories regarding the function and role of various parts of the community in the service of God and one’s fellows. A survey of the New Testament use of the Greek terms *hiereus* (priest), *archihiereus* (chief, or high priest), as well as the abstract nouns *hierateia*, *hierateuma* and *hierosyne* (priesthood) reveals this clearly. These terms in the New Testament generally apply to the priestly class of Jerusalem—the Jewish priesthood. Many of the passages where these terms occur do not endorse this “priesthood” as an active authority from God, but rather accept the Jewish institution as a sociological and historical fact, and commonly set this institution against Jesus and the early Christian community just as many references pit the Scribes and Pharisees against them. Generally, the terms “priest” or “priesthood” are not applied to Christians or seen as an element in their role as members of the Christian community.

Occasional passages refer to the Jewish priesthood in terms of its role in the faith and life of the earliest Christians because of the historical origins of Christianity as a sect of Judaism. The synoptics portray Jesus saying to a healed leper, “show yourself to the priest” (Matt. 8:4; Mark 1:44; Luke 17:14; cf. Lev. 13:49). Similarly, the Lucan infancy narrative, in an attempt to show the continuity between what Luke considers to be authentic Judaism and Christianity, presents Zacharias as a priest in the temple cult and portrays Anna and Simeon as figures in the Old Testament cultic tradition who have Christian faith. Note, however, that these nonpolemical passages still use the term “priesthood” in a sense properly referring to the Jewish priesthood and not a Christian one.

There are three important exceptions to this absence from the New Testament of the term “priesthood” in describing things Christian. The most significant exception occurs in the Letter to the Hebrews. The author of this anonymous treatise has worked out a lengthy and complex series of proofs of the superiority of Christianity over Judaism: the superiority of Jesus Christ to the prophets, angels and Moses (1:1–3:6), the superiority of Christ’s priesthood to the Levitical priesthood of Judaism (4:14–7:28) and the superiority of Christ’s sacrifice in the heavenly sanctuary to the sacrificial ritual of the Levitical priesthood (8:1–10:39).¹⁵ In the process of the argument, the term

“priesthood” is applied not only to the Levites and the Jewish Temple cult, but also to Christ. It should be noted here, however, that the priesthood in question is Christ’s, and is *never* applied to Christians in general by the author. In fact, it is clear by the line of reasoning that the main referent generating the description of Christ as the great high priest is *not* a ministry in the Christian community but the Levitical cult itself.

The other two exceptions are descriptions of the Christian community as a holy nation, a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5, 9), and as a kingdom, priests (Apoc. 1:6; 5:10).¹⁶ Although here there seems to be a genuine transferral of Old Testament priesthood terminology to the Christian community, the whole Christian community is understood, rather than a specifically ordained and set apart section of the community. This militates against our seeing even here a reference to a “Christian priesthood” as normally conceived by churches which associate priesthood with a special rite of ordination.¹⁷

I should note that although Paul does not use the words for “priest” or “priesthood” to describe Christians and their ministries, he does occasionally describe Christ in images borrowed from the Jewish Temple cult (Rom. 3:24–25; 5:2; 8:3, 34; Eph. 2:18). Additionally, in a single reference Paul describes his own ministry in terms derived from the priestly cult (Rom. 15:16). Yet he avoids the specific terms for priesthood and priest, though the words which he does use are loaded with priestly overtones. It is probably from such a reference as this that the institution and theology of a Christian priesthood was able to develop, grow, and take root during the second century A.D.

The fact that “priesthood” is not used in the New Testament to describe the various ministries and roles of service and leadership in the Christian community is important. It has far reaching implications in any attempt to build an LDS ecclesiology, or theology about the Church, and to deal adequately with the New Testament evidence. A key in understanding New Testament values as they relate to the question of the ordination of women to the LDS priesthood is whether ministries in the New Testament which normally have been associated in Mormonism with ordination to the priesthood are exercised only by men, or by men and women alike.

Despite the lack of a formulated concept of an “ordained priesthood in the church” throughout the New Testament, there are in the later books, especially the Pastoral epistles (the Pauline authorship of which is questioned, rightly, by most New Testament scholarship today), tendencies toward seeing the Christian ministries in terms of institutionally ordered offices and hierarchy. Despite these later tendencies, ministries throughout most of the New Testament are conceived in somewhat flexible and changing terms. A good example of this is found in the Pauline lists of charisms (gifts) and ministries (1 Cor. 12:4–11; 1 Cor. 12:28–31; Rom. 12:4–8; and, if we reject the Bultmannian denial of the Pauline authorship of the captivity letters, in Eph. 4:11–14). A comparison of these texts reveals many parallels and many points of divergence. Some of this results from the various settings and functions of the lists. A certain flexibility in describing the ministries is understandable in terms of Pauline thought. For Paul, “there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit;

varieties of service, but the same Lord" (1 Cor. 12:4–5). In other words, the ministries of the church are varied, and performed by various people in the community, yet all the ministries come from God. For him, these "gifts . . . differ according to the grace given to us" (Rom. 12:6), since the Spirit "apportions to each one individually as it wills" (1 Cor. 12:11). This diversity has one ultimate goal, that the Christian community, functioning as a healthy body with various members of diverse functions, "equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Eph. 4:12–13). Though certainly for Paul some of these diverse ministries are more important in the process of "upbuilding" than others, just as some of the charisms are "higher gifts" and of "a more excellent way" (1 Cor. 12:31), for him all are necessary. In his understanding, there was no one faction or group which exercised all ministries in the church, or even controlled them all.

WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

A dominant theme throughout the New Testament is that through Jesus the kingdom of God has broken into human history, and that the "age to come" of apocalyptic expectation has in some respects been realized by Jesus and in the Christian community. This dual Christological/eschatological faith informs the New Testament portrayal of women and their roles in the early church. In the "new creation" inaugurated by Christ (Gal. 6:15), "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28). This understanding undergirds much of the New Testament view of women and their place in the early Christian church despite the heavy limitations imposed upon early Christianity by the patriarchal cultures of the Greco-Roman and ancient Jewish world.¹⁸ From the beginning of Jesus' ministry, women followed him and they themselves ministered of their substance and labors (Luke 8:2–3); many were faithful to Jesus to the end of his life (Mark 15:40–41; 16:1). The first disciples to discover the empty tomb were women (Mark 16:2–8; Luke 24:1–11), and in the Matthean and one of the Johannine resurrection narratives, women were the first to see the resurrected Lord (Matt 28:1–10; John 20:11–18).

None of the various lists of the names of the Twelve includes any women (Mark 3:16–19; Matt. 10:2–4; Luke 6:14–16; Acts 1:13). But this does not mean that women were thereby considered secondary in the community and its ministries, or that women were somehow excluded from apostleship *per se*. For though the Twelve are called apostles in some passages,¹⁹ the circle of apostles was not limited to the Twelve. In Pauline understanding, the requisites to make a person an apostle were (1) to have seen the risen Lord and (2) to have received a commission by Jesus to preach (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:7–9; Gal. 1:16). For Luke, one also had to have been a companion of Jesus during his earthly ministry (Acts 1:21–22).²⁰ Significantly, women in the early Christian community met all these criteria for the apostleship. Women were among the group designated by the resurrected Jesus in Luke as his witnesses to the

world (Luke 24:48; cf. vv. 22 and 33). Just as the omission of gentiles, slaves, Samaritans and (with the exception of Judas) of Judaeans from the lists of the Twelve says nothing about their exclusion from participation in the early Christian ministries normally associated with ordained priesthood in LDS usage, so also the omission of women from these lists does not imply a less than full participation of women in these ministries.

There is abundant evidence of the participation of women in the various New Testament ministries. Women are seen exercising leadership (Rom. 16:1–2, 6, 12; Phil. 4:2–3), actively participating in church services (1 Cor. 11:5), teaching converts (Acts 18:26), founding churches (Acts 18:2, 18–19; 1 Cor. 16:3–5) and even acting as Christian prophets (1 Cor. 11:5; Acts 21:9). Many of these ministries seem analogous to opportunities available in the LDS church to religiously active women without ordination to the priesthood. However, some of these roles, particularly the founding of local churches and the exercise of leadership, have some connotations of priesthood in Mormonism. More important are two references in Romans 16 to women who seem to be exercising ministries which, though not necessarily associated with priesthood or administrative office in the New Testament, are specifically connected to priesthood office in the restoration.

Phoebe (Rom. 16:1–2) is called a *diakonos*, a word translated as “deacon” by the KJV when it occurs in Phil. 1:1 and 1 Tim. 3:8, 12. It would be ill-conceived to understand the word in Romans 16 as “deaconess,” since to do so would anachronistically read back into the New Testament an office in the early Christian church attested at the earliest in the third century, normally identified not by the word *diakonos*, but by *diakonissa*.²¹ In addition, the word *diakonos* in the authentic Pauline corpus normally means “minister” or “servant” (1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 3:4–6:13), understood as a gift rather than a specific office, and it is thus that the word usually is translated in this verse. Indeed, the word *diakonos*, as Paul normally uses it, could perhaps rightly be applied to LDS women today in their various ministries of compassionate service, teaching and administration of auxiliary organizations. Nevertheless, the word *diakonos*, as it is used in the Pastorals, does denote a specific office in the church, the office of “deacon,” and this office in early Christianity is normally understood in Mormonism as a priesthood office. Significantly, the use of the genitive “of the church” in Rom. 16:1–2 reveals that Paul is seeing Phoebe’s ministry in terms of not merely a charismatic service but also in terms of an office. As Oepke points out, “The description of Phebe [*sic*] as the *diakonos* of the church at Chenchrea indicates the point where the original charism is becoming an office.”²² Thus, Phoebe, as a “deacon,” stands as one example of women serving in ministries conceived as priestly in Mormonism.

In the same letter of recommendation in which Paul refers to Phoebe as a *diakonos*, he also probably refers to a woman *apostolos* (apostle) when he writes, “Greet Andronikos and Junia, my kinspeople and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles” (Rom. 16:7). I translate the verse thus for several reasons. The manuscript reading *Iounian*, which is the accusative singular either of the feminine proper name *Iounia* or of the masculine

proper name *Iounias*, depending upon its accent (which would not have been written in the epigraphy of Paul's day), is the best attested and methodologically soundest reading of the text. Since apparently the near unanimous voice of the first thirteen centuries of Christian interpretation of the verse understood the name as feminine, and since the masculine name *Iounias* is not attested in Greek until long after the period of the New Testament,²³ I too am inclined to read the name *Iounia*, and understand it as a reference to a woman. Finally, although the phrase *episemoi en tois apostolois* could also be understood as "well known among (i.e., to) the apostles," I believe that Junia and Andronikos are here understood as outstanding apostles, because in Paul the preposition *en* in this kind of locution normally means "among." Had he meant "to" he probably would have used the dative *apostolois* without the preposition. What we have is reference to a woman Paul considered not only an apostle, but an outstanding one.

Some of the New Testament ministries which Latter-day Saints normally associate exclusively with ordination and priesthood seemingly were exercised by women in the primitive church. Any arguments based upon New Testament scriptures to support the exclusion of women from the LDS priesthood should be carefully weighed in this light.

RULES FOR WORSHIP; RULES FOR THE HOME

There are several passages in the epistles which are often used as prooftexts to support the subordination of women to men in the modern LDS Church. These deal with specific rules governing conduct in church services (1 Cor. 11:3–6; 1 Cor. 14:33–35; 1 Tim. 2:11–15).

In the first of these texts (1 Cor. 11), Paul instructs women that they must wear a head-covering in public worship, so that they might not appear unseemly (by the social customs of his day). He justifies this practice on the basis of four things: (1) the order of creation and the ontology it implies (vv. 3, 7–9), (2) the natural decency required by societal standards (vv. 4–6), (3) the practice of the "churches of God," i.e., the Palestinian Jewish Christian churches (v. 16), and (4) "because of the angels" (v. 10).²⁴ Despite the fact that Paul firmly believes his rule is grounded in unassailable tradition (v. 2), current LDS church practice does not require women to cover their heads in regular public worship and thus demonstrates the cultural contingency of the rule.

In the second text (1 Cor. 14:33–35), a proscription is laid upon women's speaking in church. To understand these verses as if Paul were forbidding women to teach in church or publicly address the assembly, is unwarranted. The text does not refer to "teaching" (*didaskhein*) but rather to "speaking" (*lalein*), and the context suggests that Paul's main concern was to prevent disturbances caused by speaking out of turn (vv. 28, 30) or raising questions during church services better left to domestic discussion (v. 35). It is inconceivable that Paul would have considered his rule in terms of speech in general because elsewhere he endorses women who pray and prophesy in public worship (1 Cor. 11:5).

The third text (1 Tim. 2:11–15) is attributed by nearly all modern New Testament scholars not to Paul, but to a later author writing in the Pauline tradition and under his name. Here indeed women are forbidden to teach (*didaskhein*) in church and are exhorted to remain silent. This rule was not known and practiced by all the New Testament churches, for, as I noted above, women played an active role in Paul's churches, and one is indeed pictured teaching in Acts 18:26. The rule therefore should not be seen as a universal having strict normative effect upon us. The fact that women *do* teach in the modern LDS Church casts doubt on any attempt to use this text to establish an exclusionary ordination policy.

All of these passages, then, include directives of ancient church leaders to specific congregations in a specific cultural milieu about what is acceptable and decent in public worship. They do not give us absolute standards regarding who should participate in which ministries in the Church.

Since in Mormonism "priesthood" is often associated with concepts of family and family roles, prooftexts dealing with family relations are also adduced by some Latter-day Saints to support the exclusion of women from ordination. These texts occur in the "*Haustafeln*" (German for "rules of the house") lists found in the late Pauline and deutero-Pauline corpus (Col. 3:18–4:1; Eph. 5:21–6:9; Titus 2:1–10) as well as in 1 Pet. 2:18–3:7. The *Haustafeln* are exhortations addressed to various members of the *familia*, or the extended family of the ancient Mediterranean world, including slaves, children, husbands and wives. They tell people the standards of behavior they should follow in their position in the *familia*. These passages are often cited today to teach that the subordination of women is not only good, but planned and desired by God. Such a use of the *Haustafeln*, if consistently applied, would require us to argue that the institution of slavery is also desired by God. Rather, these domestic rules attempt to explicate how Christian values should form our behavior and attitudes within our circumstances and the societal constraints around us. They should not be seen as endorsements of any of these conditions in themselves. They merely assume them, and sometimes even incorporate ideologies rooted in them (see 1 Pet. 3:7).

The values informing these lists of domestic rules are significant and must be understood clearly if the inspired sense of these texts is to become apparent. These texts stress the love, consideration and respect to be shown by the various members of the *familia* in their relations to one another not the moral value of the cultural context of these relations. Although they are clearly subordinationist, it seems that they are moving away from the misogyny and slave-holding mentality of the general culture in which Christianity was born toward a more enlightened view of the intrinsic value of all people and the moral responsibility of loving one's neighbors, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph. 5:22–25); "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters . . . Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that

you also have a Master in heaven" (Col. 3:18–4:1). These texts, though phrased and conceived in an androcentric world-view, do not teach the normal subordinationism laid upon them by modern prooftexters. Rather, the subordination taught here is one in which the individual submits to and serves humbly his or her fellows, all in submission to the Lord.

The denial of priesthood and various church offices cannot then be inferred reasonably from these New Testament rules for public worship and domestic life.

THE CREATED ORDER; EVE'S TRANSGRESSION

Some Latter-day Saints may object to the foregoing treatment of these texts on liturgical and domestic regulations on the grounds that while they may argue for some rules, particularly the requirement for head-covering, which are simply "local customs and traditions," they incorporate into their argument a proclamation of "certain basic and eternal principles pertaining to men and women and their relationship to each other."²⁵ This objection rests on the assumption that the subordinationist logic used in these texts, particularly the references to the order of creation (1 Cor. 11:3, 7–8, 12; 1 Tim. 2:13) and to Eve's transgression (2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14), reflects and sustains the teaching of the modern LDS Church.²⁶ A careful examination of these texts reveals that their theological reasoning is just as culturally contingent as are the rules they serve to support. Even if one is to take popular LDS formulations of faith as the only reliable guides to "eternal and unchanging principles," the reasoning used in these texts must be viewed as limited by history and culture, for LDS doctrine thus conceived simply does not correspond to the theology in these texts. To show this, I shall discuss (1) how the use of Genesis 1–3 in these texts is more dependent upon cultural factors in the New Testament than upon the intent of Genesis, and (2) how the theological anthropology in these texts cannot be harmonized with standard LDS ideas about the eternity and non-contingency of the individual human being.

1. *The meaning later attributed to Genesis 1–3 in these texts cannot be reconciled with the original meaning of Genesis.* One of the four arguments Paul uses in favor of head-covering in I Corinthians 11 concerns the sequence of creation in Genesis and Paul's view of the ontological consequences of this sequence: the "head" (*kephalē* = source, origin)²⁷ of the woman is her husband (v. 3); while man is the image and glory of God, woman is the glory of man (v. 7), because woman was created from and for man (vv. 8–9, cf. 1 Tim. 2:13–15). It is Paul's own culture that allows him to accommodate Genesis in this way.

The two separate stories of creation, the first in Gen. 1:1–2:4a and the second in Gen. 2:4b–3:24, are discrete literary and theological units in the eyes of all leading modern interpreters of the Bible, whether they accept any of the classic formulations of the documentary hypothesis about the literary origins of the Pentateuch or not. Paul's claim that only the man was created in the image of God, or that the woman was created secondarily, cannot be gathered from the first story. There, the two genders of humanity are created

by means of the speech of God at the same moment, and both are equally in God's image, "In the image of God created he him (=humanity, *ādām*), Male and Female created he them (Gen. 1:27, cf. 5:1–2)."

Similarly, the second creation story does not lend itself to Paul's exegesis. The sequencing of the creation of man (*is*) and woman (*issā*) in Genesis does not speak to the subordination of women. At issue in this story are the unity and solidarity of the couple. They are made from one human being (*ādām*), and are bone of bones, flesh of flesh, woman (*issā*) from man (*is*) (Gen. 2:33). The usual appeal of modern subordinationists to the words "helpmeet" or "helpmate," supposedly in the KJV of his passage, is painfully mistaken. "Helpmeet" or "helpmate" do not occur in the KJV, but are neologisms resulting from an elementary misunderstanding of the archaic language of the KJV. "An help meet for him" (KJV Gen. 2:18, 20) simply means "a helper suitable or fitting for him," just as "it is not meet" means "it is not fitting."²⁸ The Hebrew expression here, *ēzer kēnegdô*, means "a help fitting for, suitable for, or even, on par with, him," and does not carry the connotation of "servant" which the English word "helper" carries.

An element in the second creation story, though distinct from the issue of creation order, has generated the other New Testament theme used by subordinationist prooftexters, the transgression of Eve (1 Tim. 2:14; 2 Cor. 11:3). The story describes the defection of woman and man (in that order) from Yahweh, and the subsequent subordination of woman to man (Gen. 3:16–17). Significantly, however, this is an etiology for the social status of women in the author's culture, set parallel to the etiologies of snakes' locomotion and the antipathy of human beings to them, as well as to the difficulty of agriculture. As such, the etiology for the subordination of women here must be considered as descriptive rather than prescriptive. To think otherwise is to suggest that in a modern application, this text somehow not only prescribes the subordination of women, but also forbids anesthesia during childbirth (3:16) and the earning of a living in any manner except manual agriculture in weed-infested fields (3:17–19). In the second story, the subordination of woman is looked upon as a distortion of the created order resulting from humankind's alienation from Yahweh. Perhaps Paul is closer to the meaning of Genesis when he stresses that despite the subordination of women in the present system of things, "in Christ" there is neither male nor female (Gal. 3:28).

2. *The theological anthropology in these texts cannot be harmonized with standard LDS doctrine.* When Paul argues for the head-covering rule, he does so on the basis that the man is the head, or source of being, of the woman, and that while man is the image and glory of God, woman is only the man's glory. This argument not only fails to adopt the relatively egalitarian perspective of the Genesis texts but also assumes many things most Latter-day Saints simply could not accept if they recognized them for what they are. Paul assumes that the very being of women is contingent upon that of men, while men's being is contingent upon the being of God. Although the idea of contingent being of humankind fits comfortably into much biblical theology

and the theology of *ex nihilo* creation in mainstream Christianity, it is contrary (though perhaps not contradictory) to much of Mormonism's symbolic expression and teaching.²⁹ The idea that all human beings are "co-equal" in their eternity with God, or that "as man is, God once was; as God is now, man may become," simply cannot be harmonized with the ontology of human beings Paul uses as a central part of his reasoning here. These ideas might be allowed to stand under an uneasy truce within their own horizons of discourse. But the basic point is that Paul's idea cannot be reduced simplistically to a reflection of standard LDS understandings of "eternal principles."

Likewise, it seems to me that Mormons who profess to "believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression" would not want to speak of the transgression of Eve as justification for the denial of priesthood to women today, particularly when denial of priesthood to males today is ideally a function of personal worthiness. This is all the more the case in a religious tradition which tends to reinterpret the story in Genesis 3 from a symbolic narrative dealing with humankind's alienation from God and concomitant human suffering, to a celebration of the descent of premortally existent spirits into a physical state of moral trial and growth.

Although the subject of priesthood ordination for Mormon women is difficult and its discussion frequently emotional, many avenues of study can facilitate understanding of the basic issues. I have discussed one of these from a New Testament context that is often overlooked. Within the LDS tradition are other overlooked elements that should be studied more fully for the insights they provide. Women already perform priesthood ordinances upon one another during the initiatory ordinances in the temple. We have a concept of a Mother in Heaven who is as divine and exalted as is the Father. In our canonical LDS scriptures there is no actual prohibition of the ordination of women. In a more sociological context, it is now quite clear that the Church can be remarkably flexible once the general membership has been prepared by the Spirit to accept new revelation through the general leaders. Black males, after all, were given the priesthood in 1978 in the face of Book of Abraham texts ostensibly far more prohibitive than any texts in our scriptures that might conceivably be used to argue against the ordination of women. In early LDS history many of the ministries later associated exclusively with the ordained priesthood were commonly the duty and privilege of worthy female members. These include such ministries as anointing with oil for the healing of the sick, the giving of blessings by means of the laying on of hands,³⁰ and the independent administration of funds in organizations such as the Relief Society and the Primary. A clear understanding on our part of the early confusion in LDS doctrinal discourse between "ordination" and "setting apart" might serve as a corrective to elements of our male-centered doctrinal expressions today.

Much theological work needs to be done: more thought about an accurate definition of priesthood, and a careful description of women and priesthood in LDS history. In terms of the general joining together in LDS theology of concepts dealing with family and priesthood, careful attention to the sociology

of family and priesthood in the Church is needed today. The dynamics of LDS biblical accommodation might be a fruitful area of investigation as well as the possible forms a revelation on this topic might take. Finally, and probably most important, a sensitive treatment of the question of gender stereotyping versus "androgyny" in terms of authentic LDS values and the formation of self-image among Latter-day Saints would help the discussion enormously. After all, conceptions of "priesthood" in D&C 121 seem to be the ideal of human service and leadership for females as well as males. (These concepts seem somewhat at variance with the hierarchial and institutional discourse generally used in attempts to defend the exclusion of women from the priesthood.)

In terms of the New Testament evidence, there is no reason to deny ordination to women; there are, instead, compelling reasons to recommend it. Yet the New Testament evidence is clearly not the only criterion which will be used to decide the issue. Since "we believe in the organization which existed in the primitive church," however, the evidence adduced here ought to encourage a thorough and self-searching investigation of the entire issue.

NOTES

¹Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Knopf, 1979), p. 259.

²See, J. A. Widtsoe, *Priesthood and Church Government in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1939; reprint, 1966), pp. 83–85, 87–89. Most of these paragraphs are Widtsoe's own or those of his wife Leah Widtsoe published originally in her book *Priesthood and Womanhood*; J. Reuben Clark, Jr., "Our Wives and our Mothers in the Eternal Plan," *Relief Society Magazine* 33/12 (Dec., 1946), pp. 795–804; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, second ed. 1966) pp. 843–44, and *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1970) vol. 2: *Acts-Philippians* pp. 359–62; Rodney Turner, *Woman and the Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1972) pp. 279–307. Common among these authors is the idea that what "priesthood" is for males, "motherhood" is for females. The difficulty with the idea is obvious: "priesthood" is the antonym *not* of "motherhood," but rather of "non-priesthood." "Motherhood" is the antonym of "fatherhood." For a discussion of this, see: Michael T. Harward, "Priesthood and the Male Experience," *Sunstone* 6/5 (Sept./Oct., 1981) 45–49.

³For background in Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism, see: Emily C. Hewitt and Suzanne R. Hiatt, *Women Priests: Yes or No?* (New York: Seabury, 1973); Marianne H. Micks and Charles P. Price, editors, *Toward a New Theology of Ordination: Essays on the Ordination of Women* (Sommerville, Mass.: Greeno, Hadden & Company, Ltd., 1976); Catholic Theological Society of America, *A Report on the Status of Women in Church and Society: Considered in the Light of the Question of Women's Ordination* (Mahwah, N.J.: Darlington Seminary, 1978); National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Theological Reflections on the Ordination of Women* (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1972); Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., editor, *Women and Priesthood: Future Directions* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1978); Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood," *Origins* 6 (February 3, 1977) 517–24; L. and A. Swidler, editors, *Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration* (New York: Paulist, 1977).

⁴The "do-it-yourself" nature of much LDS theological expression, coupled with *ad hoc* decision-making processes in the hierarchy complicate this because the issue of normative sources of doctrine is not as defined in LDS discussion as it is in the Anglican or Roman communions.

⁵See in particular *Lumen Gentium* sections 10–13, in *The Documents of Vatican II with Notes and Comments by Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Authorities*, edit. Walter M. Abbot, S.J.; trans. ed. Joseph Gallagher (Chicago: Follet Publishing/Association Press, 1966) pp. 27–33.

⁶I borrow the term “laicized” from John Dillenberger, “Faith and Works in Martin Luther and Joseph Smith,” in *Reflections on Mormonism: Judaeo-Christian Parallels*, edit. Truman G. Madsen (BYU Religious Studies Center Monograph Series 4; Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1978), p. 178. The tensions in discourse caused when one applies normal biblical or even mainstream Christian terminologies to this “laicized” priesthood are not the only tensions present in LDS theologies when viewed in a larger Christian context. Many of the theological innovations of the Nauvoo period produce similar dislocations and tensions in LDS discourse about God when it attempts to appropriate from the biblical tradition formulations about the one-ness and otherness of God. This occurs precisely because Joseph Smith “democratized” many elements of biblical descriptions of divinity and applied them to human beings in general. Thus, John’s gospel describes the premortal existence of Jesus as the divine word, whereas Smith describes *all* human beings as premortally existent. True godhood in the afterlife was similarly democratized. See Sterling McMurrin, *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Univ. of Utah Press, 1965), *passim*.

⁷Examples of this are found in two papers on the issue presented at the Sunstone Theological Symposium in August, 1981, by Cynthia Skousen Ellswood and Mark Gustavson. Also reflecting the tendency is the poem “Priesthood” by Lisa Bolin Hawkins, published in Linda Sillitoe’s “New Voices, New Songs: Contemporary Poems by Mormon Women,” *Dialogue* 13/4 (Winter, 1980) 47–61, as well as, perhaps, the article by M. T. Harward mentioned in note 2 above.

⁸See Roger Gryson, *The Ministry of Women in the Early Church* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1976); John P. Meier, “On the Veiling of Hermeneutics (1 Cor. 11:2–16),” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 40/2 (April, 1978) 212–26; Pontifical Biblical Commission, “Can Women be Priests?” *Origins* 6 (July 1, 1976) 92–96; Catholic Biblical Association Taskforce on the Role of Women in Early Christianity, “Women and Priestly Ministry: The New Testament Evidence,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 41/4 (October, 1979) 608–13; Elisabeth M. Tetlow, *Women and Ministry in the New Testament* (New York: Paulist, 1980). For a popularized treatment from an evangelical protestant feminist, see Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *Women, Men & the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1977). I note my indebtedness to the C.B.A. taskforce report for parts of my own treatment here.

⁹I argued this position at length in my paper, “LDS Approaches to the Holy Bible,” at the 1981 Sunstone Theological Symposium and forthcoming in *Dialogue*.

¹⁰See the section on LDS revelation and the propositional model of revelation in “LDS Approaches.”

¹¹For an excellent and popular discussion, see J. McKenzie, *The Two Edged Sword: An Interpretation of the Old Testament* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1956) pp. 93–96.

¹²For an overview, see Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Praeger, 1966) and Robert Alter, “A New Theory of Kashrut,” *Commentary* 68/2 (August, 1979) 46–52.

¹³See Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* vol. I (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), pp. 93–102.

¹⁴A fourth is named and called a prophetess, but she is clearly not endorsed and would in LDS terminology be called a “false” one. See Nehemiah 6:14.

¹⁵The complex argument in Hebrews uses a midrash on Gen. 14:17–20 in a crucial section about the superiority of Christ’s priesthood. The author combines Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110:4 to argue that Christ, as God’s son, though ineligible for the Levitical priesthood by lineage, possesses a priesthood “after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 5:6, cf. Ps 110:4), or “in the likeness of Melchizedek” (Heb. 7:15). Melchizedek, the Jebusite king mentioned in Gen. 14:17–20, is a prime candidate for such a comparison. The midrashic technique applied here assumes that if something is not in the text, it is not in the world. The technique therefore can note many parallels useful to the author’s intent though appearing somewhat fanciful to modern readers. The lack of mention of Melchizedek’s birth or death in the Old Testament parallels Jesus’ uncertain priestly genealogy and the everlasting nature of his priesthood (Heb. 7:3). The mention

of Melchizedek in Ps. 110 supports this parallel, for he here appears as an Old Testament figure with priesthood who was not a Levite.

Ps. 2 and Ps. 110 were originally royal psalms referring to the historical kings of the Davidic dynasty in Judah. Because they expressed a profound religious hope and trust in the anointed Davidic king, they became easily adapted and associated with an ideal future scion of David's line when the dynasty became as corrupt as it is portrayed in the major prophets or the deuteronomistic history. In that this scion as a Davidid would be anointed (*māšīah*), he can rightly be called "messianic." With the abrupt collapse of the dynasty in 587, contrary as it was to the oracle of Nathan as expressed in 2 Sam. 7:8–16, the royal messianism of such psalms naturally became more and more associated with this future David, this Messiah. As priesthood in the exile appropriated the prerogatives of the now defunct institution of kingship, including apparently the anointing, there was speculation about future priestly figures with salvific power. Thus at Qumran, there is talk of two Messiahs, one kingly and one priestly. The New Testament writers could rightly and easily adopt and accommodate the royal psalms and apply them to Jesus, in whom they saw the fulfillment of hope for the Davidic and the priestly Messiah.

The terminology "priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" in Psalm 110 probably was one of the royal titles used by the Davidic house, referring to priestly functions the king ultimately inherited from the native Jebusite priesthood of *ʿēl ʿelyōn* when David established the Ark at Zion and made the city his capital. The author of Hebrews, however, understands the terminology as a reference to a priesthood to which Abraham paid tithes (N.B., in the Hebrew of Genesis 14, Melchizedek might be the one paying Abraham, not *vice versa*) outside of the Levitical lineage. The part of the titlature, or battery of titles, specifying the king as Yahweh's son (cf. 2 Sam. 7:14 and Isa. 9:5) is likewise accommodated by Hebrews and applied to Jesus as God's son.

This text clearly triggered the LDS revelation on the terminology for Mormonism's two-tiered priesthood: see D&C 68:15,19; 76:57; 107:3–4. Here again, democratization has occurred. The everlasting priesthood which is Christ's and his alone in Hebrews (remember that in the letter Melchizedek serves as a parallel and a *typos* for Christ, not as his competitor) has become the possession of every worthy male in the restored Church.

For a complete discussion of the function of Melchizedek and his priesthood in Hebrews, see J. A. Fitzmyer, "'Now this Melchizedek . . ." (Heb 7:1)," in *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (SBLMS 5; Missoula, Montana: Scholars' Press, 1974) pp. 221–44.

¹⁶These texts are normally adduced by Roman Catholics and Anglicans when speaking of the "common" priesthood of all believers as opposed to the ordained ministerial priesthood. Note that the best manuscript readings of Apocalypse 1:6 refer not to "kings and priests to God," but to "a kingdom, priests to God." See notes 5 and 6 above.

¹⁷Some Latter-day Saints would object on two grounds. First, the old LDS missionary Bible "Ready References" provided many apparently excellent proofs of the claim that "ordination in the priesthood [was] recognized as essential by the [ancient] apostles," *right from the New Testament!* I reply simply that none of these prooftexts explicitly associate the Christian ministries with *priesthood*. Some (Acts 6:6; 13:3; I Tim. 4:14) refer to the inauguration of a ministry or the bestowal of a "gift" by the laying on of hands. Others (Acts 1:21–26; I Tim. 2:7) speak of the choosing, setting apart, or appointment ("ordination," without priestly overtones) of people into various ministries. But none refer to "priesthood" explicitly, and that is precisely the difficulty with these prooftexts. Even in the LDS tradition, it has become necessary to distinguish between ordination to the priesthood and setting apart for offices, though both these rituals are accomplished by the laying on of hands.

Second, many Latter-day Saints would point to the restoration by John the Baptist, Peter, James, John and indeed, Jesus himself, of the priesthood to Joseph Smith, and argue that this restoration guarantees that Smith's understanding of priesthood reflects precisely how ancient Christians under the leadership of these men understood it. I reply that if Christians of the New Testament period understood priesthood in the same terms as modern Mormons do today, they did not express it so. It seems clear that Joseph Smith's own understanding of priesthood and ministry developed a great deal even after the inaugural visions restoring "priesthood." Despite constant conflation of Old Testament and New Testament conceptions of priesthood and ministries in the Book of Mormon, I think it is safe to say the early sections of the D&C do *not* contain all of the advanced priesthood theology of D&C 84 or D&C 107. The visions that Joseph Smith later in life apparently viewed as the "restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods" were probably not conceived as precisely and defined as this at the time of the visions themselves. A careful study of the historical development of the prophet's own priesthood theology might

well reveal that the seminal understandings provoked by the “restoration” appearances are in fact far closer to New Testament conceptions than are current LDS formulations about priesthood and ministries. See A. Bruce Lindgren, “The Development of the Latter Day Saint Doctrine of the Priesthood, 1829–1835,” *Courage* 2:3 (Spring, 1972) 439–443.

¹⁸For discussion of the status of women in these cultures, see A. Oepke, “*gynē*,” in G. Kittel, editor, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1964) vol. I, pp. 776–89, and Tetlow, pp. 5–29.

¹⁹The term *apostolos*, as a technical term in Christianity, carried a specific reference to a special witness to the resurrected Lord and as such probably is a post-resurrectional title. Both Matthew and Mark anachronistically read the term back into the life of the earthly Jesus only once each: Mark 6:30 and Matt. 10:2. Luke consistently conflates the idea of “apostle” with the “Twelve” (Luke 6:13; 9:10; 11:49; 17:5; 22:14; 24:10) and thus avoids throughout the Book of Acts calling Paul an apostle, except in Acts 14:4, 14 (where the use probably results not from Luke’s theology, but from his slavish use of a source document—note that Luke’s normal order “Paul and Barnabas” is in this chapter alone inverted to “Barnabas and Paul”). See Raymond E. Brown, “The Twelve and the Apostolate,” paragraphs 160–82 in “Aspects of New Testament Thought,” section 78 in R. E. Brown, *et al.*, editors, *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968).

²⁰Luke’s use of the word *aner* (man, as opposed to woman) rather than *anthropos* (man, as opposed to beast, i.e., a human being of either gender) is to my mind not significant. Here, as elsewhere, Luke’s androcentric culture has colored his expression, and he does not seem to be formulating a specific response to the question of gender and apostleship.

²¹See Gryson, pp. 3–5.

²²Oepke, p. 787.

²³See B. Brooten, “‘Junia . . . Outstanding Among the Apostles’ (Romans 16:7),” in L. and A. Swidler, editors, *Women Priests* (New York: Paulist, 1977) p. 142; M. J. Lagrange, *Épître aux Romains* (Paris: Gabalda, 1950) p. 366.

²⁴See Joseph Fitzmyer, “Qumran Angelology and I Cor 11:10,” in *Essays on the Semitic Background*, pp. 187–204, for a full discussion of the passage and an excellent bibliography.

²⁵Thus Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. II, pp. 360–61.

²⁶This objection’s fundamentalist concern for the inerrant, unchanging and propositional truth of current church dogma entails serious theological difficulties in terms of LDS faith and our own experience as a people of continuing revelation. See “LDS Approaches” for a fuller discussion of these problems.

²⁷The term *kephalē*, as used here by Paul, is far richer than the normal meaning attributed to the English word “head.” It is not merely “boss” or “administrative head.” It carries ontological connotations and could well be translated as “source” or “origin” were it not for the play on words Paul intends by using the term in a discussion about veils. It is thus that most modern commentators construe the word. See, e.g., H. Schleier, “*kephalē*,” in Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*, Vol. 3, p. 679; also H. Conzelmann, *I Corinthians* (Hermeneia: Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) p. 181.

²⁸See “helpmeet” and “helpmate” in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

²⁹See McMurrin, *Theological Foundations*, *passim*.

³⁰See Linda King Newell, “A Gift Given: A Gift Taken—Washing, Anointing, and Blessing the Sick Among Mormon Women,” *Sunstone* 6/5 (Sept./Oct., 1981) 16–25.

GETTING UNMARRIED IN A MARRIED CHURCH

MARYBETH RAYNES

MY EARLIEST MEMORY of my Bluebird class in Primary is cross-stitching a sampler: "I will light up my home." Our teacher admonished us to embroider carefully because we would want our samplers to hang in our homes after we were married. Through family, church and social rituals and practices, the goal of marriage as the proper and only lifestyle was emphasized. The act of getting married was to be the major accomplishment in my life.

Although the goal was clear, the process of how to go about getting married was mystifying. Being a serious, scholarly adolescent without an older sister or experienced friend to guide me, I was baffled by the invisible social skills of talking, laughing, flirting and asking-without-asking that other girls used to start and cement relationships. Unsure of myself, I stumbled through years of wondering if the elusive goal of getting married would ever happen. And if it didn't happen, on what could I base my self-worth? But after two years with missionary "brothers," I became sufficiently self-confident to let my intuitions and hunches guide me. The great accomplishment occurred. I was chosen. I was married.

Perhaps because of the mystery of the process (it happened so fast, so wonderfully), perhaps because of the desperation of my need (to be whole, not half), perhaps for any number of reasons, the choice was not the best for either my husband or me. Although we struggled through years of trying to make that choice fit, it simply never did.

During a painful two-year struggle that began six years after the temple wedding, I embarked on the even more confusing process of getting unmarried.

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Getting unmarried in a married church was a major, seemingly endless struggle. Becoming unconnected, unsealed when all the outside forces were saying, "Stay bonded, stay sealed," was an arduous, tortuous journey. I was primed to view marriage as the *real* entry route to eternal life. Leaving that road seemed at first like finding myself on an unpaved side road, graveled, potholed and bumpy, with no roadmaps and no definite destination.

Now, four and a half years after the final divorce, single, mothering three children and working, I have discovered that the single road is not a side road but a major highway itself. And although the roadmarkers are less conspicuous, they are there in the form of stages, cautions and techniques for changing lanes and picking up speed again. Since a marriage is a marriage of many needs—social, religious, legal, sexual, emotional and familial among others—a divorce is likewise a divorce of those many ties.

Information about the divorce process is easy to locate on bookstore shelves—legal issues, household arrangements, parenting, socializing. Such advice generally approaches the problem from the outside and implicitly guarantees a happy adjustment if a certain course is followed. But information on the process of *internal* emotional unhooking is not as readily available. My experience both as a divorced person and as a marriage and family therapist instead indicates that the wisest approach to a divorce seems to be from the inside out, from inside one's emotional center where all the dreams and hopes, fantasies and needs for marriage were first implanted.

This essay is about the internal work of getting unmarried, loosening the bonds and letting go of the needs of the past marriage from the inside out. The goal of this work is to become wholly single. There are feelings, states of mind and behaviors that indicate where one is on the road to singleness. There are ways to go through this arduous process that will create a more satisfying ending. None of these ways have been easy for me or for anyone with whom I have worked clinically, but that same experience indicates that these ideas might be helpful in averting serious problems, even tragedies. When I recommend a course of action, I either have used it or am currently working with it personally. The many friends, students, acquaintances, and clients I have shared experiences with lead me to believe that these ideas are valid for others besides myself, both men and women. Of course, there are a host of additional ideas about unmarrying that are not discussed here.

The real divorce occurs internally. I'm convinced that it never occurs for some people. They are stuck emotionally in the past relationship. Sometimes they remain single. If they remarry, they add one relationship to another, thereby being emotionally polygamous.

This emotional polygamy persists because letting go is so difficult. There are so many bonds between married people. And members of the Church will have viewed them as eternal, not just temporal bonds. In addition, we are often as tied to the institution of marriage as to a spouse. It certainly is possible to like being married without liking the person you are married to. Tying the marriage knot is more than metaphor. As people going through a divorce will admit, there are actual visceral knots in the process.

These bonds or ties can be more easily loosened if we understand them. Since we have so much difficulty consciously and intellectually gaining insight into our unconscious and emotional selves, indirect methods such as dreams, fantasies, stories, habits and rituals are frequently more successful.

The dreams, hopes and fantasies we daily experience are symbols of the ways in which we are tied to other people through our most important needs. Consciously recording them, talking about them and letting them sift through our minds in an effort to understand our own symbols of connection to our spouse can be a starting point for discovering methods of divorcing the past from the present, ourself from our marriage partner.

In addition to the dreams, hopes and fantasies, daily habits and rituals keep us consciously and unconsciously tied to being married. This family-oriented church has not accidentally emphasized an increasing number of rituals to encourage a sense of family. Going to church and other Sunday rituals, family prayer, family home evening, family scripture study and family service projects are all ways of being a family, particularly a Mormon family. Going through the forms (especially if our hearts are in them) keeps us emotionally centered in “familyness” even if the marriage relationship is not going well. In getting unmarried, we must encounter those rituals again in some way and account for them differently. Many are not very evident: the subtle patterning of bathroom and breakfast routines, of leave-taking and greeting, of touching and being touched are so familiar they are only noticed when they are disrupted.

A friend related to me that she had not realized how much she had cooked just to please her husband. After the separation she found that her children would no longer eat what they had been previously encouraged to eat. She didn’t want to eat that way either. A year of haphazard eating followed: unscheduled meals, everyone getting his or her own, fixing different dishes for each person, etc. Finally they all faced the issue squarely and decided part of being a family for them was eating together. They then consciously started the compromise process of learning to eat similar food at the same time.

Even though the real divorce is emotional, and I believe, usually occurs months or even years after the legal divorce, the process of divorcing—of getting unmarried—begins much earlier with precisely those disruptions of familiar routines. When some important family or marriage ritual fails to occur (saying goodbye in the morning, for instance), the sense of malaise lets us know something is deeply wrong. Later, the disturbance extends to our thoughts, moods and even body carriage, reinforcing our awareness of the trouble the marriage is in. At some point in this disruption period, nearly always one event occurs which triggers the realization that the rift is unresolvable and the emotional fact of divorce suddenly becomes a reality. Most divorced people detail that moment or event with great clarity. It often hits like a thunderbolt and brings a storm of feelings and questions. My own storm included many devastating questions about the Church. What would the Church do with me? In addition to having my temple recommend voided, would I be released from my calling? If “no success can compensate for failure

in the home," was there anything I could ever do in the future to make up for the present damage? The old questions of self-worth flooded back. What would my family think? What would others think? How would they treat me? Would I lose friends? Being divorced in the Church seemed then more terrible than never having married. Most of all, the question kept coming: Was I worthy in the sight of the Lord? These were only some of the questions that covered the whole scope of my life. They each took months to answer.

THE STAGES OF UNMARRYING

Other writers have divided this long, convoluted and confusing period in different ways. My description comes from my own experience, observation and reading. Each stage typically takes several months. Hurrying the process doesn't often help. Major surgery heals slowly, whether it is physical or emotional. Also, these stages do not easily correspond with the legal divorce. Some people are legally divorced within weeks of realizing something is wrong. Others have fashioned a new life long before they are legally single.

The first stage is one of shock, confusion, grief, depression, anger and ambivalence. Repressed or unacknowledged insights come in whirlwind fashion. For many people there is an overwhelming sense of being out of control. Some persons cycle in and out of this stage and the next: alternating confusion and calm. Many crises happen now and will continue to happen in some fashion until both spouses clearly understand that a decision is made.

Whatever the circuituous course of this stage, a firm decision needs to be made before one can reach resolution and move on with one's life. Those who can never decide or who keep getting pulled back into the marriage generally only condemn themselves to more of the same. If recycling the decision seems to be a pattern and you are still as confused as ever, set aside a definite period of some months duration to stay *in* the marriage. Use those months to choose a definite course of action, and see a competent marriage counselor.

The last few months before the decision to divorce, I experienced excruciating periods of confusion and pain which alternated with periods of surprising clarity. The torment was overwhelming until I came to realize that one of the most difficult aspects of becoming unmarried was parting with all the hopes and dreams I had spent years nurturing. The death of my dream of a happy marriage extending into eternity hurt me in places I could never have predicted. It seemed that I was not just saying goodbye to one relationship but to all of my past teachings and commitments, goodbye to my images of forever. Closing an important door behind me with no new doors in sight was truly frightening. I was not even sure there *were* any more doors. From my current perspective, this attitude seems irrational—and it was—but that bleak loss and pain was something I had to understand. I prayed long and hard during those months. As my form of prayer changed from desperate pleas to give me a clear answer as quickly as possible to an open-ended dialogue in which I assumed responsibility for my decisions and actions, helpful insights started to come. The first major one was that I wouldn't get an answer quickly and that I would have to be patient.

Once the urgency of time was removed, I started to understand that I was saying goodbye to my past and to my whole preconceived images of future being. The clouds of confusion cleared, and I saw that I needed to clean out my congested closet of romantic fantasies, cull out the old notion that only married people were truly all right, discard the idea that life is only worth living in a married state, and accept the truth that everything else isn't "on the way to" or "instead of" marriage.

This second stage is often characterized by the feeling of relief, euphoria or resigned acceptance. There is a definite perception that your personal world is getting better. Winter is past, spring has arrived. Some experts label this the "promiscuous" stage because new freedom incites many to reach for any and all relationships in view. This time is refreshing and new but unstable. In the first stage we were vulnerable to the past. Now we are vulnerable to the present and future. Relationships are likely formed on the basis of healing past wounds or meeting long unmet needs. I feel that experimenting with many new kinds of relationships during this phase is appropriate, but that seeking for a committed relationship is not. Family members and friends who hope that you will "find someone soon" are making dangerous wishes. Friendships with people of both sexes as well as dates with different people give a perspective and balance that cannot come by narrowing in on one new relationship.

For most people this second period will last a year or two. Letting go of the past occurs slowly. Many fresh insights about ourselves and how we are with a person other than our former spouse come as we put ourselves in a variety of experiences. For me, it was exhilarating to discover that disagreements with others *could* be discussed without cycling into anger or silence, the standard pattern in our marriage.

Third comes a time of consolidating the tearing-away stage and the trying-out stages. We need to give ourselves time to move at our own internal speed. For me, new understanding about myself, the past and the directions in which I wanted to move began to emerge during this phase.

About two years after my divorce was final, I started to understand what my ex-husband meant when he called me a bitch. From the perspective of time and positive experiences in new relationships, I was able to acknowledge that I had been cold, analytical and demanding at times when my expectations were not satisfied. I finally realized that like many others, I had brought a list of expectations to marriage, and rather than tear up the list I had torn up the person. I was pained in a new way about how much damage I had inflicted. It has been two and a half years since that realization, and I have tried hard not to impose a list of demands on the new relationships in my life. I think I am succeeding—which is the only reason I can share this example.

Understanding our part in the dysfunctional relationship is crucial preparation for the fourth stage: reaching out for long-term or committed relationships that may lead to marriage. Another important criterion is detachment from the past pain and struggle. If the past consistently troubles us or the relationship with the ex-spouse is still hurtful, ambivalent or too close,

we are not ready. Readiness is signalled by a full sense of being single, not married. The feeling of transition is past.

In my view, forming new intimate relationships that are durable or that lead to marriage is a hallmark of finishing the divorce process. Dating partners or friends are chosen on the basis of current interest and needs. Rituals and habits formed will probably differ from the marriage patterns. Most certainly conflict is solved in a more satisfactory fashion. A male friend recently explained, "I knew I had made it through when I stopped comparing new women with my ex-wife."

Any unresolved dilemmas from the past that are truly important will likely re-emerge in a new relationship; thus the work of letting go must be done whatever the circumstances. This is why I believe in taking time, otherwise there might be a skeleton in the closet later. The recent film, *Chapter Two* by Neil Simon, fully illustrates the backlash the second wife inherited because her new husband had not resolved his grief after the death of his first wife.

The work of these stages is not complete until, at the end, two events have occurred: we have said an irrevocable goodbye to the marriage (though not necessarily to the spouse), and we feel ourselves fully single and unmarried. To some extent, the process applies to any separation—leaving home, recovering from the death of a spouse, adjusting to any major loss.

SAYING GOODBYE

Saying goodbye is a skill which is rarely taught and, in fact, may seem unnecessary for Mormons because of our belief that we will be eternally sealed to one another. Consequently, we don't face a final farewell even in death. However, this view, which may obscure the fact of death, can cause devastating complications in divorce. A death of a relationship is as shattering as a death of a person, but others don't take it as seriously because, after all, the person is still alive. If children are involved, we will have a relationship with the ex-spouse for the rest of our lives.

We have many rituals for beginning and continuing. Baptisms, blessings, endowments, wedding celebrations and housewarmings all provide form for startings. Anniversaries, the sacrament, going to the temple and seasonal rituals all commemorate ongoing patterns. Only funerals and missionary farewells are ending rituals and often neither acknowledges the finality of an ending in the eagerness to celebrate continuation, new opportunities. Even more rare, neither ritual attends to the fact that every person present is going through a personal rite of passage from the past to the future.

There is no public or standardized ritual for divorce; but in the last few years, I have found an astonishing array of rituals that people have privately created for themselves to aid their exit from a marriage. Some people have simulated a funeral ceremony. Others have gathered with friends or family to celebrate or commiserate. Still others take a respite from social activities to take a journey inward, to clean house and to complete unfinished business. Many accounts tell of people who strike outward and physically go to another part of the country or world to forget or to "get their feet on the ground

again.” A friend who regularly celebrates and nourishes ongoing relationships by going out to dinner, takes himself alone to a restaurant when a friend dies or moves away and uses the solitary meal as a vehicle for saying goodbye. While reviewing each stage and important event in the past relationship, he lets himself feel all of the sweetness and pain that letting go means.

However, many of these newly created rituals often ignore the complexity of emotions and ties that marriage represents. A divorce ritual deserves more than just a celebration or a funeral. Most people will experience a potpourri of feelings: sadness, relief, pain, excitement. All are appropriate because an important end and an important beginning are occurring simultaneously.

If we have no public rituals and no history in our families or church of saying goodbye, what is needed? Four ideas might help.

First, we need to symbolize the truly important memories for ourselves as individuals, not as part of a married team. A few weeks before I was married, Joel Moss, a favorite professor of mine at Brigham Young University, wrote me a letter with some unique advice that I didn’t know how to take at the time, even though it stuck in my mind. I learned what he really meant while divorcing. He recommended that I fully examine all my memories of past romantic relationships to understand what my dominant needs and interests in those men were. Then I should find a way to symbolize those needs for myself so that they could continue to be fulfilled yet become separate from the past relationships. My needs are legitimate and require new forms of expression in a new relationship. Examples of needs are adventure, intellectual stimulation, a sense of belonging with someone or continuity. Identifying the need will help me choose something to do or own in order to meet that need safely in the future without being trapped into trying to recreate past events.

The clearest example came from a client of mine during this last year. She had had several past experiences in which her partners always had private nicknames for her and she for them. That practice was an emotional treasure chest. She always experienced a secret glow of feeling special when she heard the names. But her most important present male friend not only did not have any nicknames for her but thought they were silly and rebuffed her few attempts to address him with an endearment.

I explored with her exactly what feelings came to her when she had heard the nicknames in the past. She said she felt special, treasured, chosen and quickly agreed that she *does* like feeling chosen and unique. I then asked her to watch her friend’s behavior closely during the coming week and notice possible ways he might have of treating her as unique or treasured. During that week and the several following, she started to notice that even his casual touches were different than the way he touched others, that he talked exclusively with her about some topics, and that he always made a point of telling her children that his place was next to her in the car or at the dinner table. She started feeling treasured and special again; the need to have a nickname disappeared. In addition her fantasies and longings for the past relationships faded.

Second, the old relationship should discontinue. Its basic nature, formed on many functions (friend, lover, spouse, financial partner) should change to one (parenting) if children are involved, none if there are no children. It is possible to have a friendship with your former spouse, but generally only after the divorce process is finished. The friendship is best then reconstructed, not continued from the past.

Divorcing spouses are easily magnetized by each other. Our subtle years-long "dance" with each other in a multitude of areas renews itself almost instantaneously upon contact. We simply don't know how to act any other way with each other yet.

The unweaving of habit patterns can be facilitated in several ways. No contact at all is the most drastic and often the most jarring because our natural response is to continue: continue calling, continue trading some details about the day, family members, friends, sexual contact or affectionate interaction. Nevertheless, cutting off contact is often the most effective way to face the reality of our singleness by forcing ourselves to rely only on our own resources.

Other ways are possible. Unidimensional contact, such as only discussing parenting matters or arranging visitation, helps untie the past. This includes consciously changing old places of meeting and discontinuing most former topics of conversation. Also, find new people for old functions or find your own strength to meet your own needs.

Third, form some rituals or events for saying goodbye. Go back to old places and houses. Talk to yourself about what you remember, how it feels and what it will be like to never be there again in the old way. Provide some kind of benediction for yourself such as a prayer or leaving without looking back.

When I left the last apartment I lived in before I moved into my present house, I realized that some important transitions in my life had happened there in the two years since my divorce. After moving out all of the belongings and cleaning each room thoroughly, I reserved several hours the following morning to return by myself and say goodbye.

I walked into each empty room and sat down. Then I let the memories flood over me in whatever order they came. And I let the feelings associated with them freely surround me. I laughed; I also felt angry, exhausted, overwhelmed, enlightened and peaceful. As the memories and feelings faded, I felt a settled peacefulness and a lightening. Leaving the key inside the house, I locked the door and left. I have never gone back. I seldom think of it. Everything I need from that period in my life is within me, not back in those rooms.

Fourth, planning a future that has evolved from but that does not replicate the past can be truly helpful in unloosening old ties. Think through attachment to physical objects. Weigh carefully what you will do with them.

One person I know sorted her books after her divorce; intellectual stimulation—a feeling that important ideas expressed the essential quality of life—was significant to her, so she took the books that reflected those needs

and were associated with her. She left those that reminded her of her husband. A good rule of thumb is: If any object consistently reminds you of the other person and that reminder serves to pull you back into the past (with either positive or negative feelings), don't take it. If you decide to give it away, reflect on how and to whom you will give it. You will be giving away part of your old self and your old relationship at the same time.

People are often advised during the divorcing process to move into different quarters. I agree. When you start turning new corners in a different location, you can more easily start turning new corners inside yourself. The common practice of one partner leaving the home with little or nothing and the other staying with nearly everything may make getting unmarried more difficult for both. Being surrounded by the familiar artifacts of the disrupted marriage may be as hindering as facing the blankness of four walls with no meaning. Staying in a ward where everyone associates you with an ex-spouse may be more difficult than entering a ward alone.

You may also find that strong attachments persist with old rituals. For example, Sunday rituals are often changed dramatically. I remember facing with trepidation the idea of attending church with three children six and under. How could I get them to sit still enough for me to get any meaning out of the meeting? Weighing which parts of Sunday ritual to keep and which to change has been a trial-and-error process over the last few years. Also, family prayer has changed. It gradually seemed necessary to decide to keep the meaningful parts and to give the rest a new face.

BECOMING FULLY SINGLE

The second crucial part of getting unmarried is becoming fully single again. Those once married can probably remember how it felt to move from an internal sense of being single to feeling part of a unit, feeling married. Notice the pronouns. Many married people use *we* when talking about ideas and activities that concern only themselves. Changing from *my husband* or *my wife* to *my ex-husband* or *my ex-wife* takes conscious, at times stumbling effort. More than one man I have dated still said *we* unconsciously when talking about his career and children quite apart from his ex-wife. I believe strongly that to make one's future more successful, and certainly to facilitate future love relationships, *one must become fully single* before reconnecting or recommitting in a new relationship. It will not do to go from one *we* to another *we* without an intermediate *I*—our own solitary singleness in the middle.

There is always a tension between being alone and being together. On one level, we are always ultimately alone. On another level, we are always connected. We have learned to feel better about being with someone than being alone, yet it is possible to feel just as good, though in a different way, in solitude. A number of solitary modes are highly respected, such as prayer or creative work like writing. Valuing solitary time as well as communal time relieves some of the loneliness.

Committed relationships entered too quickly cause their own problems. I feel that our first goal should be to enter relationships that will help us

become single again. Only after that goal is achieved should we look for long-term relationships.

Initially don't plan on commitment from anyone, most of all yourself. It will take time and experience to make a choice that fits your best internal needs and few people know what those needs are initially.

Two time guidelines, roughly formed from marital research, are: Do not remarry within two years of the divorce. Do not marry someone whom you have known less than a year. These guidelines represent good survival sense. A second marriage choice is more complicated than a first choice; there are more factors to consider to acquire a good fit.

I made a commitment to follow both of these guidelines after my divorce became final, and within a year I was considering a permanent attachment with a man I had dated six months. Largely because of my commitment to myself, I waited. I'm grateful I did. My judgment in that relationship turned out to be very poor. I was reacting out of my past too much to have a clear awareness about how this new relationship would work in the future.

The second guideline also still holds for me. I feel an important sense of freedom about new relationships because I know I won't consider a marriage decision with that person for at least a year. More than one man has reacted positively to the open-ended sense of time. Knowing if a relationship will work over time comes before knowing if a marriage will be successful. Forming attachments slowly seems to help me make better judgments. The romantic part of me finds it difficult, but the rational part says it's worth it.

Stephen Johnson, in his enormously helpful book *First Person Singular*, details not only the necessity of becoming a fully functioning single person before moving into new relationships, but provides good advice about how to do it. Being single does not mean being half of a past or future whole person, which implies that you are "between" marriages and dependent on another person for fulfillment of half your life's needs. Instead you now face squarely the realization and responsibility (many times heavy and lonely, yet freeing) of putting together your whole life for yourself and becoming a truly independent person. This does not imply that you have no deep connections to people. On the contrary, new kinds of bondings allow sharing, caring and intimacy but do not rest happiness on one full-time relationship with the same person. I believe that two independent people who consciously choose to be interdependent with each other stand a much better chance of making a new relationship work than two people who depend on each other to make their lives happy.

The reason is obvious: without becoming fully single, we are likely to build the new relationships on the same old patterns—and hence the same old problems. Also, many people form a new attachment as a means of giving up the old. Second marriages in America do not stand a better chance of survival than first marriages (which means sixty to seventy per cent survive), which suggests that many people don't use the process of getting unmarried and remarried as a chance to grow.

Many of us, in short, are conditioned to seeing a sequence of marriage-divorce-remarriage. I am arguing for a change of attitude and perspective to

marriage-divorce-singleness before considering a committed relationship. Spelling out the sequence this way makes time a friend, rather than an enemy. Respecting the transition as a valid developmental stage will prevent us from falling into the trap of thinking that an external event (getting through the first year, getting the children in school, getting remarried) will somehow get things back to normal. *Normal* is an interior feeling, not an external event.

Friends or trusted confidantes, of both sexes, will be available during all stages of the transition. If they are, use them. If none are available, building friendships will be more important than building new dating relationships.

Fortunately for me, friends gave me immeasurable help during this period of confusion and realization. Their mirrors on my moods and actions gave me many new insights into myself. One of those friends, who is very introspective and sensitive to relationship issues, had been through the process herself and pointed out trouble spots and some guidelines. One extremely important guideline was that people would respond to my divorce about as well as I did. If I felt that what was happening is basically right, and if I felt generally good about it (no one feels ecstatic or completely settled), those around me would feel similarly. If, however, I felt terrible, overwhelmed and out of control, other people would probably also conclude that what was happening to me was terrible. That insight has not only been true for me but for many of my clients. I—and they—need to spend enough time with ourselves and with trusted friends to sort ourselves out before presenting the whole process to my outside world.

USING A SUPPORT SYSTEM

I've decided that a support system of some sort is absolutely necessary both to a good decision about the divorce, and also to the process of saying goodbye and adjusting to becoming single again. Investing wholly in a relationship puts necessary blinders on ourselves. We simply lose some objectivity that only an outside view can supply. But we need the right kinds of outside view. Some people and some kinds of advice can be lethal. Following are several guidelines I have pulled together for myself:

1. Only talk deeply about feelings and plans, to those you trust deeply. Inappropriate self-disclosure will not only make you feel more vulnerable later, but it may also invest more of you in that relationship than you want.

2. Only talk deeply to people who are not invested in the outcome of your decisions. If someone has a definite opinion about what you should decide about the marriage, and if you are still weighing it for yourself, you can be really thrown off-balance by the weight of biased advice. For this reason, consulting family members will probably result in some trouble at some time.

Likewise, in hearing a person's marital troubles, do not give advice, just support. Even if your advice is right, you stunt their ability to find answers and take responsibility for them.

My particular friend, in the long months of my making a decision, never told me what she thought I ought to do. I really didn't know what her opinion was, although I wanted it badly at times to relieve me of my own struggle for

certainty. Not until I filed for divorce, and it was clear that I was going to go through with it, did she share her thoughts with me. I am truly thankful for her support and respect for my ambivalence.

The only exception to this rule should come when a person is being physically abused or emotionally overwhelmed to the point that she or he is disoriented and is steadily losing the ability to make good judgments. Even then, direct advice is often unheeded and unhelpful. Instead, steer her or him to an outside source competent to give direction.

3. Always keep friends of both sexes around you to provide some balanced judgment about your life's decisions. Keeping silent about your emotional life is dangerous; you have lost all checks and balances. Close friends that you discuss the important areas of your life with will help keep you from forming inappropriate ties too early.

4. Weigh the advice within yourself, not by taking a vote from friends and relations. This means spending hours—lonely at times and sweet at others—pondering, contemplating and listening only to your own inner voices. They will be many, but the wheat will emerge gradually from the chaff in the practice of external silence, internal listening. Sometimes a journal is helpful in the sorting-out process. Prayer that listens more than asks is a vehicle to many insights. Contemplation and meditation techniques train you to quiet yourself in disquieting times.

DEALING WITH THE CHURCH

Being single in a married church is very different from being married in a married church. The connection to the Church alters for many during the process of joining a minority. If, while being married, we felt that being single indicated weakness, maladjustment or unworthiness, we may find ourselves taking those labels on ourselves in the transition to singlehood.

For example, regardless of the reason for divorce, a temple recommend becomes void when the divorce is final. The newly divorced person must then go back to the bishop and stake president to renew the recommend. For some this can be a supportive process; others experience it as inappropriate interrogation. If the divorce did not involve sexual misconduct, the recommend is relatively easy to obtain. If sexual issues are involved, the process can be lengthy. If having a current temple recommend in your possession is one of the standards of worthiness that you have used, you may feel some strain.

It might be helpful to draw a distinction between being worthy in the Lord's eyes and being judged worthy in the Church's view. The former is based on internal criteria (one's relationship with the Lord, spiritual maturity, personal revelation), the latter on external rules (amount of compliance to commandments and policy). Also, being worthy according to the Lord seems to imply adherence to eternal principles (seeking after righteousness, being compassionate, honest and humble, serving others, etc.) while being worthy according to the Church is more concretely defined in terms of specific rules

(keeping the Word of Wisdom, church attendance, sustaining the General Authorities, etc.).

If you make choices different from those sanctioned by the Church (deciding to remain single or becoming sexually active), additional strains may appear. Another separation, estrangement or unloosening with the Church may start occurring. Whether the member defines this process positively or negatively, it seems to me that this process occurring simultaneously with the marital separation may become a double divorce and prove overwhelming or devastating. If possible, take one issue at a time instead of trying to deal with everything at once. One acquaintance purposely put some serious questions about certain Church issues on “hold” until her marital decision was made. She said that it was difficult to consciously ignore many important issues, but that she was glad she waited until she had strength to give them her full energy.

Also, if you were married in the temple, the time lag between the two divorces—civil divorce and cancellation of sealing (if it occurs)—can cause a time lag within oneself. At what point do you really think of yourself as unmarried? In addition, if a cancellation has not been received by the time a person decides to remarry, the new spouse may experience feelings of being “second-rate” until the previous union has been voided. Often members, particularly women, have been advised not to seek a cancellation until they are about to remarry so that they won’t be left single in the eternities. How can one feel eternally secure having a spouse one cannot feel mortally secure with? Finally, a man may remarry without a cancellation of sealing; a woman may not. In a recent discussion, an active male member had a hard time understanding why his fiancée wanted him to apply for a cancellation of sealing before his marriage to her. She said she wanted all the ties unloosened. He replied, “What does it matter? Polygamy will be the order of heaven in the next life.” She retorted that she didn’t want to be a second wife—then or now.

Another church policy that can cause newly single members difficulty concerns church callings. Some leadership positions in the Church may not be filled by single adults. Those who have previously held such positions often lose them in the transition of divorce. Others realize that, although comparably capable or worthy, they will never have those opportunities open to them. Presiding authorities even within the Young Special Interest and Special Interest organizations are almost always married, and may have little understanding of the experience of being single. A year ago, the annual three-day singles’ conference at BYU featured a program in which an overwhelming majority of the speakers were married.

Also, the emphasis on getting married, reiterated often over church pulpits, can add frustration to the lives of single people. In my experience, most single adults already value marriage and are doing everything within their conscious power to become married. Exhortations or admonitions are not often helpful because they emphasize marriage as an accomplishment, and the implication is that the single person doesn’t quite measure up. If worth

in the kingdom is attached to being married, many may feel like misfit members, whatever the activity.

One of the largest areas of confusion and struggle for church members becoming single again is in the area of sexuality. My own thoughts, feelings and discoveries in the process of becoming single are individual, but they have been reinforced by my clients, LDS or not.

Every single adult Mormon person, man or woman, that I have talked with about sexuality echoes a common theme: How can I have my sexual needs legitimately met? How do I explore and nurture my sexuality when the church restrictions on sexual conduct are so inflexible?

To me, even phrasing the questions in this manner reflects an assumption that sex is dangerous and negative and that people who have any sexual contact are evil or fallen.

I believe that we need to reframe how we view sexuality. Sexual feelings, thoughts and urges are powerful, but not necessarily dangerous. They come without conscious will at many times, but so do urges to eat, sleep, laugh and play. I see sexuality as basically positive—and not just for reproduction or for enhancing marital communication. The same energy that stirs sexual growth is conducive to growth in the other areas of the soul. For example, how many parents have experienced an increased ability to be spontaneously nurturant with their children the morning after a wonderful evening of having nurtured themselves with lovemaking? I believe that my resources to discipline my sexual urges to serve my overall well-being increase when I view my sexuality as an integral, good part of me. I feel that sexual thoughts, feelings and fantasies are welcome. But that still leaves me free—and responsible—to choose my action, and I can choose to have sexual interaction occupy a minor role in my overall life's activities.

Since most people experience their sexuality nonverbally and nonrationally, these patterns and needs are very difficult to face objectively during a time of difficult transition. Exploring the possibility of having sexual and affectionate needs met with new people in new ways is confusing, exciting, often frightening.

In my opinion, one of the central points of confusion is between sexual and affectionate behavior. They can be mutually exclusive. It is possible to be nourished and warmed by affectionate interaction that excludes whatever sexual behavior you feel is outside your sexual values. It is, of course, also possible to be sexually satisfied without a shred of affection. Most people getting unmarried have fused the two because they had their affectionate and sexual needs met by the same person. Also, most divorcing persons have had the sexual and affectionate components of the marriage disrupted long before the legal process begins. The unmet needs in both areas may be intense. We need to discern between intimacy and erotic needs. Too often we use *intimacy* as an euphemism for *sex*, thereby losing sight of the possibilities of emotional intimacy.

We are often most vulnerable in our sexual behavior not just because our bodies are unclothed but also because our emotions hold sway to a larger

degree than at other times. A large part of the enjoying and being enjoyed is letting ourselves go—abandoning ourselves to the spontaneity of impulse within safe boundaries. After divorce the safe boundaries are gone, and usual patterns of impulses, hopes and wants are frustrated at the precise time when we need release, new spontaneity for discovering new ways and most certainly support in healing our wounds—those long held or newly acquired.

Many of our dreams and fantasies about being whole, being totally accepted and loved are sexual. Although total acceptance is never possible continuously, we all need it momentarily. We need to be fed through heart and soul regularly to maintain a sense of wholeness, of being connected to others and of basic humanness and worthwhileness. At this time the intensity of sexual feeling and expression matches the intensity of our need to be loved and desired.

For the divorcing person, this need to feel whole instead of fragmented, connected instead of broken, and worthwhile instead of worthless is paramount. A friend related that one of the very satisfying parts of getting married was the special feeling of being “chosen,” but that one of the most excruciating parts of divorcing was feeling “unchosen”—rejected, thrown away.

So how, when feeling most vulnerable, rejected, do we acquire what we need?

First, separate emotional closeness from the erotic. Make the distinction initially in your mind and then in your being. Recognize that there are many ways to closeness that are satisfying (all have their risks, of course) without focusing on the sexual. This is not to say that the erotic feelings are wrong, but that erotic expression is unavailable to many in appropriate ways, or that the intensity of the need or the timing of the wish doesn't fit the relationship one is currently in. Irv Polster, a well-known therapist, after having his head rubbed by a friend, reportedly said, “This feels as good as sex, but our lives aren't organized for sex.”

Second, focus on the sensations of touching (notice the warmth, softness, closeness, contact) wherever you encounter it. Many occurrences happen daily: touching colleagues on the arm or back, holding a child, petting an animal, receiving or giving a massage with a friend.

Many times when I feel exhausted, drained or bruised, the most nourishing thing for me to do is to ask a friend to hold me. Arms tight around me with a shoulder for my head reconnects me and literally recharges me with energy. I feel cared for and united not only with that person but with the rest of humanity.

As an experiment, I asked a client of mine who was feeling lonely and isolated, even though active in work and Church, to thoroughly notice, savor and enjoy every time she was touched, even fleetingly, through the coming day. She reported being astonished not only at how much touching occurred but also at how satisfying that contact was when she noticed it. Not all, but some of the loneliness drained away.

At some point (very often, in fact) a divorced person says, “This isn't enough. What I really need is warm, loving sex.” You're right. We all need

it. However, if it is not available or if it is inappropriate to your value standards, focusing on what is lacking only increases the emptiness and longing.

At those times we have to face ourselves and say “I don’t have what I really want, but that it not so terrible. What I have will have to do, and it is *enough*.” When I find within myself what is enough, it gradually becomes plenty, and I learn to acquire nurturing and warmth from what is available to me. By dreaming, fantasizing and thinking of the ultimate fulfillment (which being married doesn’t guarantee as we painfully know), we lose sight of what is enough, and then what we have is not acceptable. Yet paradoxically, focusing on the small incidents—smiles, touches, hugs—lowers our threshold and all contact is included in the boundary of being enough.

Another unexpected event can happen. All forms of touching acquire a truly wonderful validity. No longer is sexual touching “real” touching with everything else secondary.

CONCLUSION

Now that I feel myself fully single, the world is entirely different from before. It feels as whole as being married once did. Being single has allowed me to collect all the parts of myself, has forced me to acknowledge my responsibility for all the functions in my life and has finally allowed me to feel the freedom that competence and mastery give.

My perspective now is that being married or being single are both simply circumstances. Both are conducive to growth. Neither is easy. Both require us to face the same basic dilemmas of life: survival, spiritual growth, balancing our own needs with others. The question now seems not “When will I get remarried?” but “Which circumstance is currently best for me?”

Where I go from here is unclear to me. I have never before felt so much uncertainty about my future with so much security. I do know that I want to continue growing, finding better ways to love and help people, feeling more deeply and richly, continuing the spiritual search the gospel invites us to do. I feel as eternally connected to many of my family members and friends as I ever felt married to my former spouse. My commitment to the motto on my Bluebird sampler has never been truer—but who could have imagined all the wonderful ways to do it? The context of how I play out my life now doesn’t seem as important as the means I use in doing it. My eternal well-being now seems to rest more with how I am internally linked to the Lord and other people than with how I am externally connected by formal bonds, ties or ordinances.

MARY FIELDING SMITH: HER OX GOES MARCHING ON

LAVINA FIELDING ANDERSON

I SHOULD PREFACE THESE REMARKS by establishing two things. First, I am no blood relation to Mary Fielding Smith, although, like all of you, I proudly claim her for a spiritual sister; second, my subject is not Mary Fielding Smith herself but what she represents: the process by which women of church history are turned into heroic role models for women of contemporary times.

Why did I choose her? Before the age of eighteen, I would guess I knew the names of only three historic Mormon women: Emma Smith, Eliza R. Snow and Mary Fielding Smith. In terms of biography, I knew nothing about Emma except that she was Joseph Smith's wife and the first president of the Relief Society. I knew that Eliza R. Snow had written "O My Father." But I knew a lot about Mary Fielding Smith: I knew she had an ox raised from the dead.

I knew that the captain of her company tried to persuade her not to come to Salt Lake because she would be a hindrance, and that she announced she would beat him to the Valley without asking any help from him—and made it. I knew that when her oxen were lost, the men hunted for them unsuccessfully, but she, after praying, went directly to the thicket where they were entangled, disregarding a herdsman who told her they were in the opposite direction. I also knew about the tithing clerk in Salt Lake Valley who tried to tell her that a poor widow like herself shouldn't pay tithing and whom she rebuked because she needed the blessings.

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At eighteen, those were the things I knew about Mary Fielding Smith. I'm not sure where I learned them. I went back to my old Sunday School manuals, and not one of those stories is there. Primary manuals? Seminary and Church history? MIA manuals? I couldn't find a trace. But whatever the source, I *knew* the stories. And for me determined faithfulness became a synonym for Mary Fielding Smith. In other words, Mary Fielding Smith was a role model, an ideal, a heroine. Technically these words don't mean the same thing, but I will use them somewhat interchangeably because I suspect that the differences depend more on the generations we belong to than on semantics.

And those three words have always been double valued—a fire to warm that can also burn, an anchor to stabilize that can also immobilize. When Janath Cannon was in the Relief Society General Presidency, she lamented the fact that so many sisters don't seem to understand that “ideals are stars to steer by, not sticks to beat ourselves with.” There is a terrible—and sometimes fatal—ambiguity in ideals. They are powerful—and we need that power to make us reach beyond ourselves. But they can also overpower us and destroy what is unique in each individual by emphasizing only what we share in common with others.

Let me talk about three different aspects of this ambiguous power: First, the ways in which ideals (heroines or role models) can help us; second, the ways in which they can damage us; and third, some suggestions for ways to be warmed and enlightened by them without being burned and blinded.

The gospel itself is designed so that we learn it by role models, which is the first reason for our having them. Christ gave us an insight into the whole process when he issued that invitation, which is also a commandment, “Come, . . . follow me” (Matt. 19:21). And later he asked the Nephites, “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily. . . , even as I am.” (3 Nephi 27:27.) He presented himself as the perfect role model. To me this indicates that the search for role models is ultimately a righteous one and also a very natural one, possibly an inevitable one.

The second reason for our having role models is linked to the first. We learn principles from people. The great emphasis that the scriptures place on teaching can also be read as a great emphasis on teachers. In addition to the central image of Christ as the perfect teacher, we have the scriptural models of Abinadi teaching the wicked priests of King Noah, his words falling on the prepared heart and awakened mind of Alma. We see the pattern repeating itself a generation later when Alma's testimony of Jesus is the key that unlocks the chains of hell for his apostate son. It carries into a third generation as Alma the Younger teaches his own sons, Shiblón, Coriantumr, and Helaman, the same truths of the gospel, especially the centrality of Christ. We don't have an equally dramatic chain of mother-daughter teachings, although we know from the testimony of the apostle Paul that a woman named Lois had a powerful faith that blossomed also in her daughter Eunice, and bloomed again, equally strongly, in Eunice's son Timothy. A more modern example is found in an article some of you may have read in the June 1978 *Ensign*, “Our Five-Generation Love Affair with Relief Society” (pp. 37–39). It is by Athelia Tanner Woolley, whom I first met when we were on our missions in France.

In it she talks about how her children “play Relief Society” and how in that play is the seed of a sixth-generation love for Relief Society that Athelia learned from her own mother, Athelia Sears Tanner, who learned it from her mother, Athelia Call Sears, who learned it from her mother, Mary Thompson Call, who learned it from her mother, Pamela Barlow Thompson, who learned it from her mother, Elizabeth Haven Barlow, a member of the Nauvoo Relief Society—all of them ward Relief Society presidents at one time or another.

The third reason why role models are so important for us is also found in the scriptures. When Alma the Younger is transmitting the precious gold plates to his son Helaman, he explains why they must be cherished and preserved: “They have enlarged the memory of this people” (Alma 37:8). That is what role models do for us: They enlarge our memories, our imaginations, and our capacities. Through the stories of how others have met and overcome obstacles, we furnish our minds with alternatives for action and enlarge our own repertoires for response. By comparing what we might do with what our heroine did, we can walk through some decisions before we have to make them ourselves.

There’s a fourth reason for role models—how we relate to others. In a fine Commissioner’s Lecture Series address given at BYU in 1972, Leonard J. Arrington, then Church Historian, said, “Church history has much to do with the establishment of our identities.” By providing us with heroes, it provides us “with desirable patterns of identity and behavior.”

Second. . . one of the great strengths of the Church is its ability to give us the sense that each of us is playing a part, however humble, in the great drama of religious history which we are certain will eventuate in triumph. Third, the Church provides a fellowship—a visible community. . . a spiritual home. [“Church History and the Achievement of Identity” (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1972), p. 6]

We need role models, not only because they teach us how to relate to ourselves and to the gospel, but because they teach us how to relate to the larger community of the Church.

Remember Mary Fielding Smith and her ox? Those four little stories teach us how our own resources can be magnified if we will call on the Lord in faith. They also teach us that the Lord is responsive to prayer and that the Church has room for everyone—an impoverished widow, a crabby captain and a nine-year-old boy who didn’t know he was going to become President of the Church someday. Finally, they teach us that the Church demands commitment and work from us.

Now let us look at the other side of the ideal, the dark side of the star, as it were, and see some of the ways role models can be dangerous, even damaging.

The first problem I see is the natural and inevitable consequence of that great strength: that we learn principles from people. The Church is in the business of teaching principles and has always known the value of illustrating

its principles with the lives of exemplary people. The problems come when a person becomes *only* an illustration. Mary Fielding Smith is an example of faith. Heber J. Grant is an example of persistence. Deborah in the Old Testament is an example of courage. And so forth. You can see the danger of equating one person with one trait—it turns that person into a stereotype.

And I feel that Mary Fielding Smith *has* become a stereotype, an image larger than life. We don't see her developing faith. We just see her being completely faithful. If we don't feel our own faith growing, Mary may overwhelm us with her perfection. Furthermore, we may see her life as being controlled *by her faith*—and that is a big difference from seeing her life as being controlled *by her decision to be faithful*.

How did Mary become a stereotype? Davis Bitton, in a masterful article entitled "The Ritualization of Mormon History," points out that this process is "not invention." Instead it is "a selecting out of certain aspects, dramatizing them, memorializing them, and giving the whole the simplicity of a morality play." The end result is to transform "events and personalities. . . into something fixed, heightened, and to a greater or lesser degree, standardized." (*Utah Historical Quarterly*, 43 [Winter 1975]: 75, 79.)

Until Ronald G. Esplin of the Church Historical Department publishes his study of the marriage of Mary and Hyrum Smith, the standard biography of Mary Fielding is Don C. Corbett's *Mary Fielding Smith, Daughter of Britain* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1966). He notes that she died in 1852, four years after reaching the Valley, and that after the funeral there was no formal tribute for more than thirty years until Joseph F. Smith, her son, published a faith-promoting story about her. Then Corbett says things like this:

Down through the years since her death, Mary Smith's name *has grown* and become significant in Mormon history—a saintly memory—associated with pioneer times. Her heroic stature has inspired the teacher, painter, and historian. This one pioneer, perhaps more than all others, seems to *epitomize* all the magnificent Mormon women who crossed the plains. . . . Hers is an *image* rooted in outstanding deeds and accomplishments. [Pp. 267–68; italics added.]

A little later, he uses that significant word again: "As her *image* has steadily *enlarged* in word, print, and picture, more and more have come to know about her." The very choice of words betrays that we are meeting, despite her very real virtues, not a real woman, but an enlarged image of one, more heroic in retrospect than she was in life.

In addition to being larger than life, this image of Mary is also more incomplete than life. Some traits get selected for emphasis and others are deemphasized. In both Corbett's biography and Joseph F. Smith's account, much is made of the unreasonable and petty persecution she suffered from the captain responsible for their safety as they crossed the plains. No doubt there was some real friction, and he may have been genuinely unreasonable. However, both Joseph F. Smith and Don Corbett are descendants of Mary Fielding Smith, and it is possible that their loyalty to Mary's image was an overriding consideration. That captain, Cornelius Peter Lott, may not have

been quite the villain he seems to be. One of his descendants pointed out to me that Cornelius managed Joseph Smith's farm outside Nauvoo and later managed Brigham Young's Forest Farm here in the Valley. Joseph Smith III, the son of Joseph Smith, remembers an incident in Nauvoo when his father had wrestled all comers and had thrown them all. Cornelius Lott was, at that time, seven years older than the Prophet; but, when challenged, he immediately responded in kind: "Well, my boy, if you'll take it catch-as-catch-can, you can't throw old man Lott!" Young Joseph recalls that the Prophet and Brother Lott closed with each other several times, "But the best Father could do was to get the old man down to his knees. . . .He gave up his efforts to throw the sturdy old fellow and much good-natured banter at his expense was indulged in as he gave up the struggle." (Mary Audentia Smith Anderson, ed., *Joseph Smith III and the Restoration*, condensed by Bertha Audentia Anderson Hulmes [Independence, Mo.: Herald House, 1952], pp. 34–35.) An even more important personal connection was established when Cornelius's daughter, Melissa, was sealed to Joseph Smith by Hyrum Smith on 20 September 1843.

Brigham Young also trusted Cornelius. In Winter Quarters Brigham Young brought two women to Cornelius, and he married them for life, with Brigham officiating. The two women were then sealed for eternity to the Prophet Joseph. Clearly the marriage was to provide a means for the women to reach the Valley, because both of them later married other men in Salt Lake. (See Lott Family Bible, Historical Department Archives; Rhea Lott Vance, *Descendants of Cornelius Peter Lott, 1798–1972* [n.p., n.d.], pp. 2–16; Winter Quarters sealing records in possession of Lynn Carson, Salt Lake City.) Obviously he was efficient, capable, reliable and trustworthy.

Most of the negative stories about the petty harassment and tyranny Lott inflicted on Mary come from Joseph F. Smith's recollections written years after he had crossed the plains as a nine-year-old. Both Cornelius and Mary were dead by then. Joseph F. revealingly says that at one point on the journey he "resolved on revenge for . . . the many . . . insults and abuses [Lott] had heaped upon my mother, and perhaps could have carried out my resolutions had not death come timely to my relief and taken him away, while I was yet a child" (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1969], p. 151). Although Joseph F. Smith was not known as vindictive, once he was grown, he certainly seems to express vindictive feelings on this occasion, and his image of the villainous captain is the one that has prevailed, just as his heroic view of his mother has prevailed.

I had the image of Mary as being virtually alone except for her little son, Joseph F., and braving the sneers of the vile captain as she struggled westward. In actual fact, she arrived in Winter Quarters with a household of eighteen people, including her sister Mercy Fielding Thompson; her brother Joseph Fielding; their families; the five children of Hyrum by his previous marriage, including a sixteen-year-old boy; her own son and daughter; three hired men; an unmarried woman who had been living in the Smith household and helping with the homemaking duties since at least 1837; and an older man who was a general handyman. Possibly even more important, she had

been sealed to Heber C. Kimball in January 1846 for time only (she was sealed to Hyrum for eternity) and thus was part of the Kimball family. At one point, Heber sent back two teams of oxen to help her get her outfit up to strength as she left Winter Quarters.

About half of these people went on with others before Mary herself left Winter Quarters in June 1848. Knowing that Mary wasn't alone—that she had her brother; Hyrum's oldest son, who was in his midteens; her own nine-year-old son, Joseph F.; two stepdaughters; her own daughter; and three adult women—means that she had, at the very least, a group on whom she could count for moral support, even though the logistics of keeping track of five wagons and teams and loose stock would have complicated the problem. (Incidentally, even though the incident of losing the oxen and being inspired to find them in the thicket usually gets transferred to the trip across the plains, it actually happened during a trip back to Winter Quarters from St. Joseph to purchase needed supplies. There must be a Law of Multiplying Drama that allows for condensing as much as possible into as short a time span as permissible.)

But possibly the most dangerous aspect of the problem occurs in our own minds when we take a simplified, stereotyped image and try to squeeze our own complex and rather recalcitrant lives into those limited dimensions. It is artistry that creates these simple heroines of faith out of living people—and art renders an incomplete imitation of life. When we, in turn, try to imitate that art in our own lives, frustrations can easily multiply, making us feel incompetent, unworthy and overwhelmed.

But what is the answer? Are we to ignore role models altogether, to eschew ideals, and resolutely carve out a wholly individualistic path? Of course not. In the first place, to do so is impossible. Even if we wanted to, we couldn't help seeing desirable aspects of other people's lives and imitating them. Furthermore, let me mention again the underlying, eternal reason that gives role models their power: We learn principles from people. Our ultimate teacher and our ultimate role model is the Savior himself. It is an act of the utmost pride and folly to think that we can achieve salvation without following that model.

However, let me suggest a few things that we *can* do to benefit from the light and warmth of starry ideals without getting so starry-eyed that we stumble into a ditch.

First, we can recognize that institutions can create role models and offer them to us as guides but that we need to select role models appropriate for our own circumstances. As Leonard Arrington mentioned in "Persons For All Seasons: Women in Mormon History," (*BYU Studies*, Fall 1979, pp. 39–58), the Church has emphasized different aspects of women's roles in different ways as the Church's needs have changed. He saw the Church originally honoring "mothers"—women like Lucy Mack Smith and Elizabeth Ann Whitney who self-sacrificingly nourished the Church, their families and the poor during the difficult years when the Church was being established. In early Utah, the emphasis was on kingdom-building, and he saw the Church emphasizing a "sister" role for women, encouraging them to work alongside

the brethren in building communities, supporting missionaries, and becoming self-sustaining. Still later, when the battle against the desert had been largely won, there was time for women to explore individual talents, and in the “daughter” role encouraged by the Church they founded newspapers, sought educations and developed creative talents.

It is obvious that now the Church sees a real need to encourage women to focus on strong marriages and families. You can see this example in the Relief Society manual for 1979–80. I looked at the illustrative examples used in the year’s lessons and found, excluding the cultural-refinement lessons, seventeen examples of men, nine of women in general, one working woman, three converts, eight older women, thirteen identified by Church calling, fifteen single women, and *fifty-two* mothers. The sheer repetition communicates the importance of a mother’s role. But what if you are not married? Or married but childless? Or what if your children have left home? In some ways, the role model of a mother is then less relevant to your circumstances. Should you feel excluded, peripheral or rejected? Certainly not. The most important thing we can do to keep ideals from getting out of hand is to select the ones that are applicable to us rather than worrying because we don’t seem to fit into the one that the Church might seem to feel is most important right now.

The second thing we can do is to be fair—to refuse the trap of thinking that a selective, simplified stereotype of a woman is the whole woman. It would be easy for us to think that Mary Fielding Smith, with her great faith, never had any problems that she couldn’t work out simply and effectively with the Lord’s help. If she was perfect in faith, she must have been perfect in every other aspect of her life as well, particularly with her children and her marriage. After all, she married the Church Patriarch, and her son became president of the Church. How successful can you be?

Well, there were some rough places in working out that family. I was very moved by reading some of the letters (currently being edited for publication by Ronald G. Esplin of the Joseph F. Smith Institute for Church History at BYU) that she and Hyrum exchanged during the early years of their marriage. Mary was thirty-six years old when she married Hyrum, and his first wife, Jerusha, had been dead less than three months, leaving five children, ranging in age from ten to newborn. According to family records, the Prophet Joseph received on behalf of Hyrum a revelation urging him to remarry quickly and designating Mary as that woman. (See Corbett, pp. 43–44.) During the next seven years, they left Kirtland, moved to Missouri, were driven out of Missouri, and re-established themselves in Nauvoo. Hyrum was absent a great deal of the time, leaving Mary to cope on her own. One of her Nauvoo letters, giving the family news, ends on a genuinely sad note. She signs it, “your faithful Companion and Friend but unhappy StepMother M. Smith.” Then in a long postscript, she reports stories that have come back to her that even Hyrum felt she was “an Oppressive StepMother to your Children.” (Mary Fielding Smith to Hyrum Smith, 14 Sept. 1842, Archives Division, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.) She expresses her hurt and discouragement that her best efforts had

been so unappreciated. With so many Latter-day Saint women today facing the challenges of second marriages and blended families, it somehow gives Mary a dimension she lacked until we learn that she felt insecure about how she was doing, that she needed Hyrum's support and reassurance, and that she felt downcast when the challenges seemed insurmountable. And his letters from Liberty Jail express a trust and tenderness that show real affection.

Obviously, then, we should be willing to work to know these women as whole people, rather than as stereotypes. Because of the Church's teaching goals, the institutions in the Church give us selective information. This is their job. But it means that we will be given stereotypes. Our responsibility is to go beyond the stereotype and to sometimes go beyond the material available in lesson manuals or selective biographies. For example, the social relations lessons in the 1967–77 Relief Society manual are on leadership. They introduce us to twelve historic women who illustrate different aspects of leadership. But only one of them, Martha Spence Heywood, is presented in any kind of detail—more than two or three hundred words—so that we have some sense of her as a whole woman.

Another example is Emma Smith. The Church has never come to terms with Emma. Instead we've ended up with two stereotypes in absolute conflict. One stereotype is the angel Emma, the elect lady, beloved wife of Joseph, recipient of the only revelation addressed to a woman in the Doctrine and Covenants, first president of the Relief Society. How can we think ill of a woman who was not only the wife of a prophet but *the* wife of *the* Prophet? Yet we also have the stereotype of the evil Emma, the Emma who opposed polygamy and didn't come west, the Emma whose son became president of another church, the Emma who must not have had a testimony of the gospel. The only article completely devoted to Emma ever printed in an official Church periodical in one hundred fifty years ends with the death of Joseph Smith (Valeen Tippets Avery and Linda King Newell, "The Elect Lady, Emma Hale Smith," *Ensign*, September 1979, pp. 64–67. Their biography of her definitely will deal with her entire life.). I feel that until we accept Emma as a full woman, as both our sister in the faith and in some ways as our spiritual mother in the faith, we will be cut off from understanding part of what it means to be a woman in the Church today.

These ambiguities are eloquently expressed in part of an unpublished poem by Dianne Dibb Forbis of Rexburg, Idaho:

I was afraid to know you
Emma.

Wishing, wanting you as queen,
I dared not let my touch explore full texture
of your after-Carthage
velvet choice that seemed so wrong.
Weren't royal robes then textured crudely?
Weren't they whipping in wild winds
on the barren and bleak plains?

My allegiance went with wagons
 Westward
 while your tragic tears
 blurred your steady gaze on truth,
 kept you clutching souvenirs.

Admiring you seemed heresy,
 Rejecting you would be too cruel.

One of the most interesting aspects of this study about Mary is something that I *didn't* find out. I have asked a half-dozen people about the incident of blessing the ox. Almost without exception, they had the idea in their mind that Mary had done it herself. So did I. That ox gets resurrected an amazing number of times in Church literature—at least a dozen times, by my hasty count. And in every version that mentions Mary's ox, Mary called on her brother and another elder to anoint the ox.

So why is there this residual folk memory that Mary did it herself? It indicates to me that we have a fatal fondness for the dramatic and a woeful weakness for the stereotype, a weakness that we must be on guard against at all times. We want Mary to anoint her own ox because it makes a more powerful story—Mary alone with her faith against the wicked Cornelius Peter Lott and the dead ox.

But this subconscious rearrangement of the facts into folklore also indicates to me the protean forms that this story can take without losing its power. It was not at all uncommon for pioneers to anoint sick and dying animals. I have not made a systematic search to find out when the first recorded instance of an individual using the priesthood to bless an animal occurred, but I suspect it was after leaving Nauvoo during the traumatic trek across muddy Iowa when unsophisticated eastern horses were getting bitten by rattlesnakes and eating unfamiliar plants that turned out to be poisonous. Several journals from that period record discussions about whether blessing an animal was a proper use of priesthood authority. (They decided that it was.) I mentioned one example from Newel K. Whitney's journal in an article in the January 1980 *Ensign*, "Memories of the Way West," p. 22. Until I had done that research, Mary's ox was the only one I had ever heard of that had been administered to.

But Mary's ox was enough. When Old Buck got up and strode on towards the Valley, he walked into history. The hunger in us to believe that faith and priesthood ordinances can raise up a dead animal—or provide food for the starving, or comfort for the bereaved, or as Gene England has testified, keep a balky Chevrolet limping along so that he could perform his duties as branch president in Minnesota (see "Blessing the Chevrolet," *Dialogue*, IX (1974): 57–60)—that hunger is nourished by stories like this. Mary has taught us an element of faith that we might not otherwise know.

And the shadow of that ox stretches into our own day. When a friend in New York heard that I was doing this paper, she wrote back:

Our dachshund developed bladder stones several years ago (about three to be exact) and I took him to the vet who wanted \$600 for surgery

which might only give temporary relief until the stones formed again. I asked him the cause, etc. (increased alkalinity), and went home to think about where in the world I was going to come up with \$600. Melissa (then twelve) said, "Get the elders to give him a blessing." I thought, "Why not?" So I called and of course nobody wanted to stick his neck out and do it so I called an old Utah farmer who was also the head of the high priests quorum. Yes, he'd heard about Mary Fielding Smith, but that was a long time ago, and he figured it was some misuse of priesthood power. *But*, he said, . . . nothing would be lost if I and the girls were to have a little prayer circle because there was no place I was going to get \$600. . . . So we (Jill, Melissa, and I) got down on the floor and held Max (the dog) and we just went around the circle saying a prayer. I was in the middle of my part when it dawned on me that I *might* be able to change the hyperalkaline bladder back to normal by feeding the dog some kind of acid. It came to me that I should feed him 500 mg. of vitamin C (ascorbic acid) every day. So I bought chewables and did just that. Three years later the dog is going strong sans bladder stones. . . . He's still on vitamin C also.

Oxen can trample and gore—but they can also pull our wagons to promised valleys we could not otherwise reach. Mary Fielding Smith's ox marches on. And as we follow it, there may be moments when we feel a little breathless. But may we enjoy the trip.

RETELLINGS OF THE OX STORY

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Tullidge, Edward W. *The Women of Mormondom* (1877; lithographic reprint, Salt Lake City, no publisher, 1957), pp. 347–48.

Webb, Kay, "Not Alone," *Instructor* (July 1960), p. 215. (No mention of raising the ox is made, but in a commission for a painting, the bishop making the commission specifies, "Can you idealize these oxen; can you give them the touch of heroism that Sister Smith gave them by her association?")

MY PERSONAL RUBICON

ELEANOR RICKS COLTON

LIVING IN OUR NATION'S CAPITAL during the recent ERA controversies has been a learning experience for me. After the turmoil of the 1975 IWY Conference in Utah, I spent a good deal of time trying to understand the basic issues giving rise to the controversies. As Washington D.C. Stake Relief Society President, I was embarrassed that I knew so little about these questions. I decided to telephone friends in other states to learn what I could from them. The more I listened, the more I became disturbed about what seemed a mockery of a process that had been touted as a truly democratic one. I came to think of the whole slate of women's conferences as a carefully orchestrated plan to insure a hardline feminist platform. Furthermore, I was surprised to learn how many civic-minded Mormon women had not even bothered to attend the conferences and so hadn't become involved. Opinions of women who did attend seemed to fall into two categories. Those supporting ERA and abortion rights felt the conferences were well-managed. Those opposing these causes felt that so much care had been taken to muzzle opposition that they had been outmaneuvered and under-represented. The more I studied the states' conferences the more I began to realize that much of the trouble stemmed from the National Committee which, although funded with tax money, did not fairly represent a cross-section of the political views of American women.

About six weeks before the national conference in Houston (chaired by Bella Abzug, who was to accuse the Mormon Church of planning to disrupt the conference), a former stake president under whom I had worked as a Young Women's President called and asked me to attend a meeting at the home of Eleanor McGovern. This meeting was designed to bring opposing women's groups together with leaders of the IWY conference. He advised me that if given the opportunity, I should explain the Church's stand against the

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ERA. "Brother Ladd," I said, "I am not sure I understand that myself." He chuckled in his good-natured way. "Well, you have three days to find out."

I hung up the telephone stunned at what I had agreed to do. I have never been a debater. I consider myself a peacemaker, and I have always gone out of my way to avoid confrontation. The more I thought about what I had been asked to do, the more upset I became. I decided to retire to the special place in the woods behind our house that I think of as my own "sacred grove," there to think and to pray. As I prayed, I asked forgiveness for all the hours I had spent in "idle pursuits." I expressed fear that my hearing disability might prevent me from understanding the statements of others at the meeting. In fact, I outlined every fear and inadequacy I could think of. Then I went on to review the great blessings of my life. I pledged that I would do everything I could to understand the reasons for the Church's opposition to the ERA and try to explain them through my own firm testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I decided it would be hypocritical of me to sustain President Kimball with my upraised hand only to oppose him with my mouth. As I left the woods that day, I felt I had crossed my own personal Rubicon.

I also felt alone. Remembering the wisdom of sending missionaries and visiting teachers two by two, I made two phone calls, one to Marilyn Rolapp, a delightful, intelligent Social Relations leader on our stake board and one to Nona Dyer, a dear and admired friend in Salt Lake City. Marilyn I asked to be my partner, and Nona I asked for information on the Church's position on ERA. By noon the next day, the information had arrived, and Marilyn and I buried ourselves in paper.

Eleven P.M. the night before the McGovern meeting, I found myself mentally exhausted from cramming and insecure because my husband was out of the country and so unable to give me his reassurance. Just then the phone rang. It was my daughter Carolyn calling from BYU. She was suffering from senior panic. I shared mine. She said, "Now, Mom, the Lord doesn't expect you to become Rex Lee overnight! Stick to the issues you understand, and before you go to bed, read Section 100, verse 5 of the Doctrine and Covenants and Chapter 4, verse 5 of Ephesians." This wisdom from my only daughter. I fell asleep refreshed.

The next morning one of our sons entered my room "Mom, since Dad isn't here, would you like to have a prayer with me?" We knelt together as my football captain son offered a short, sensitive prayer in my behalf that will be engraved forever on my heart.

By the time Marilyn and I arrived at McGovern's, we were ready to spar with Bella or anyone else who might take us on! But, alas, the leaders of the conference had cancelled the meeting on the grounds that it would be "counterproductive" to meet with us and other anti-ERA groups. Although we were not tested that day, we knew we were stronger, better informed women than we had been before. Since there were other women there with the same feelings, we were able to meet with them for a few minutes. We found them intelligent, dedicated women with legitimate concern for the meaning of a constitutional amendment and its effects on future court decisions. It was nice to have company.

A short time later Bella Abzug held another press conference announcing twenty-six goals for the National IWY meeting which supposedly set forth major concerns of women and labeled "subversive" those groups that disagreed with her. The Mormon Church was among them.

This labeling angered me. I asked myself why should one woman have the power to decide for all women? I became so angry that I wrote a letter to the *Washington Post*. A good friend, Lee Roderick, edited it for me and suggested I change it from a letter to an editorial. It appeared on November 21, 1977.

Breaking into print not only made me feel better, but it brought me in contact with neighbors and other acquaintances who engaged me in lively discussions on many sides of the issue. Interested in learning more about the proposed extension of the ratification debate, I decided to attend some of the Congressional hearings. I had been told that proper attire for such occasions included a button indicating my stand as a lobbyist. Pro ERA people wore green buttons; those opposed to the extension wore red buttons. I felt somewhat shy about this because of my natural repugnance to the steam-roller tactics employed by leaders of both groups. To assert my independence I made my own button from a red paper plate with the carefully printed words, "Stop ERA Extension." When I timidly stepped on the elevator to the House Chambers, I was taken aback to hear a woman say to a group of green button wearers, "We don't need to ride with her," and they stepped aside to wait for the next elevator. This experience was repeated on three other occasions!

Later when the extension was debated in the Senate, I invited a niece to accompany me and to wear one of my homemade buttons. After we found seats in the chambers, a woman with fire in her eyes approached us and hissed, "You've been reported!"

"I have?" I replied, bewildered.

"Yes," she snapped. "You're not allowed to wear buttons in here!" I looked around. All the other women in our section were dressed in white, the chosen symbol of the ERA supporters and easily recognized by any Senator who might cast his eyes upon them. I couldn't help but laugh: "Thanks for telling me!"

Unfortunately both sides of the political fray were guilty of name-calling to a disappointing degree. On voting day a friend and I stood in a crowded lobby by one of the doors to the Senate chambers when a huffy woman behind me said, "If these two Judases in front would move over, there would be room for more of us!" I turned, and said as kindly as I could, "Remember that in a political contest all wisdom and good motives and all good people are seldom found on only one side. If we're going to have to stand here all morning, let's at least be kind to each other." A man dressed in white who stood beside her seemed relieved as he struck up a conversation with me.

The circus atmosphere was unbelievable. Crowds of women positioned themselves to be seen by Congressmen as they came to vote. Men, experts in political influence, were herding groups of women from both camps like sheep. Many of the women seemed lost or puzzled. A few women stood just inside the chamber. I watched them hug congressmen and ask, "We can count

on your vote today, can't we?" Wives and daughters lobbied husbands and fathers. Feelings were intense. If I had not been there and seen with my own eyes, I would not have believed Congress could extend the time for lobbying without at the same time giving states the right to rescind.

When the Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights convened in August, 1978, I was there to hear Sonia Johnson testify. In writing of this experience, she has stated that she felt she was carrying on the work of her foremothers. I could only wonder that day how our foremothers could possibly have applauded her criticism of church leaders. Here was a wholesome-looking, tart-tongued Mormon woman belittling the leaders of her church in a public forum. No wonder she was welcomed with open arms by the National Organization for Women.

Her testimony was reported in detail by the media. In most of the reports, Birch Bayh was painted as a hero and Orrin Hatch as a villain who had overstepped the bounds of good taste and good sense. It is true that some of Senator Hatch's words were not well-chosen, but he was obviously frustrated in his attempt to clarify the fact that Sonia should not be considered as representing all Mormon women. It was reported that he shouted at Sonia. Though he was emphatic, he did not shout. Birch Bayh was just as abrasive. In fact, I would describe him as a "smart aleck." (I can no longer read a newspaper without realizing how difficult it is for a reporter to be objective.)

Sonia states in her book that when she walked out of the hearing room into the foyer, "the anti-ERA women surrounded me at once." I was the first to greet her, and the woman with me was Jewish. I was not aware of any rush. In fact, I was disappointed that so few Mormon women were present at the hearing. We see what we want to see. We hear what we want to hear.

Looking back, I don't believe Sonia had any idea how offensive her words were, how belittling of church leaders and of Mormon women who in good faith disagreed with her point of view. I think she was carried away with enthusiasm for her cause and with the applause of her supporters. I felt sorry for her then, and in the months to come, I was to feel even more sorry to see her excommunicated, not only for her sake but for the Church's sake as well. I felt the excommunication only poured gasoline on the fires of misunderstanding.

I experienced more of that misunderstanding when I became involved in the Maryland White House Conference on Families. Believing that women in our stake could exert a positive influence on the proceedings, I eagerly offered my services. At the first organizing meeting in our district, I was dismayed to find the groups already politicized into two warring camps: Pro-Life and Pro-Choice, as they were called. When the meeting's goals were obstructed because of the feuding, I stood and pled with the groups to concentrate on areas of agreement. In desperation and because of the late hour, the State Chairman finally said, "I will appoint Mrs. Colton temporary chairman of the Washington Suburban Conference and ask her to meet with you next week to choose a permanent chairman. Perhaps then we can complete our agenda." Although I was already in charge of a Family Preparedness Conference on

Saturday, I accepted and in my politically naive way offered the stake center for their Monday meeting.

Sonia Johnson's excommunication hit the media that weekend. By Monday the news was everywhere, including our meeting. The rooms were overflowing with three times the expected number of men and women, most of them hostile and impatient. Within minutes I was replaced as chairman and asked to complete the agenda only because the new chairman had not attended the organizing meeting.

I have never before or since witnessed such rude behavior among women. It took every ounce of energy I had to maintain an orderly meeting. It was apparent from the beginning that I had been branded a red-eyed Mormon, unfit to represent liberal Montgomery County. In fact, the delegates had already decided that no Mormon would be allowed to represent the state of Maryland, and that Maryland was going to do everything it could to avoid following Virginia in choosing a slate of conservative delegates. (Later however, a Mormon delegate was to win decisively at the local conference.)

Determined to prove that my years of experience in conducting church meetings were not in vain, I completed the agenda in record time and offered my help to the new chairman. A few people apologized to me afterwards, but I was bruised by the ill will directed at the Church because of Sonia's troubles. I resented being told I could not be in favor of women's rights and against ratification of the ERA. The intensity of feelings over abortion rights was also incredible to me and was too much mixed in with the ERA.

Disappointed by the biased reporting of Sonia's excommunication, I wrote a letter to *The Washington Post*. One of the editors called me on Christmas Eve to say that since Sonia had written an editorial the week before, perhaps I would like to write one too. Although this was the last thing I wanted to think about on Christmas, I told them that if they would allow me a few days to prepare, I would oblige. This was my second positive experience with the *Post*. Although a number of other Mormon women could have been more articulate than I, few could have been hurting more than I was at that time. My editorial appeared December 28, 1979.

I have listened to legal experts debate the ERA; I have read the legislative history of the amendment; the Yale Law Review papers, papers prepared by the League of Women voters and I have subscribed to publications touting all aspects of the controversy. I sincerely feel that because women can achieve equal protection under the law without the ERA—as the steady progress of the last ten years has shown—the risks outweigh the benefits. I believe, however, that the movement to enact the ERA has done some good by helping to bring changes in laws and improved professional opportunities for women. But many feminists, by minimizing the importance of the family and by seeming to embrace lesbianism, abortion and rebellion against the patriarchal order, have polarized women into positions more extreme than they really feel.

Even Betty Friedan now agrees. In *The Second Stage*, she says, "Woman has a double set of needs: power, identity, status and social security through

her own work or action in society, which the reactionary enemies of feminism deny; and the need for love, status and security and generation through marriage, children, home and family, which those feminists still locked in their own extreme reaction deny. Both sets of needs are essential to women and to the evolving human condition."¹

I for one am weary of the strife and the exaggerated promises on all sides of the ERA issue. I am eager to bind up the wounds they may have caused. Negative publicity about Mormon women has been bruising, but I hope it will cause us all to become better informed, more articulate in explaining our beliefs and more willing to share the leadership, compassion and love we develop as members of the Church.

Women have a responsibility to help their fathers, husbands, sons and the other men with whom they work to understand their needs. We must do it through persuasion and love. I have been blessed throughout my life by being close to men and women who understood the power of the priesthood and used it to benefit others. Because of this I have tried to search my feelings honestly and my attitudes of appreciation and resentment toward the priesthood in my own life.

My father died when I was only six years old. My mother was forced to move her brood of five from the farm to the city in the middle of the Depression. As strangers in a sad and trying situation, we were warmly accepted by a ward of loving, caring people led by a bishop who understood his stewardship. My first impression of priesthood authority, then, was one of love and concern.

As a teenager who led her Sunday School class out the front door of the church in rebellion over the unrighteous dominion of a teacher, and again later when I refused to transfer to a new ward after a division, I learned from two other bishops the spirit in which the priesthood should be exercised. That is the spirit of persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness and love unfeigned.

The most sustaining priesthood influence in my life has come from being married to a man who understands the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants, who views our marriage as an equal partnership, not only in the rearing of the family, but in helping each other to attain eternal goals. I don't hesitate to point out his erring ways, and he freely calls me to repentance. I have felt from him a constant, loving support in all my responsibilities. He has pitched tents for girls' camp, blown up thousands of balloons, rolled out of bed in the middle of the night to rescue stranded youngsters, delivered endless loads of food and decorations all over the country, washed dishes and cleaned house when I have been ill or when extra families have lived with us, helped feed high school football teams, co-hosted dozens of slumber parties and counseled our children with pride and wisdom. His special blessings on members of our family during illness, heavy responsibility and stress have sustained and strengthened us.

I have always enjoyed "running the show," being in charge, up front, giving orders. So has my husband. We have bounded back and forth in the giving and taking of turns. He has not shown signs of intimidation at my

leadership ability, nor have I been threatened by his organizing skills. We have felt only pride in one another's accomplishments. While holding various ward and stake positions, I have worked with some men I consider outstanding leaders. I can't remember ever feeling repressed by them. In most cases, I was given free rein and encouraged to use my own initiative. There have been times when I have been disappointed in a man's dependability, but I have had the same experience with women. Sometimes I have felt a priesthood holder was overimpressed with his own importance, but I have always considered this to be his own problem and not the fault of the priesthood.

We vain, insecure, bumbling mortals are all the Lord has to work with, and yet he sees in each of us divine possibilities. Each time I have been released from a church position, I have been shocked to realize the false sense of righteousness I felt because of the applause and visibility the position brought. The regular turnover in church positions wisely reminds us that none are indispensable but all are important.

Too many dump their problems on the Church, blaming it for their unhappiness. Whenever I hear "There is no place in the Church for me!" I wonder, "Who is the Church?" We as a community of believers in Jesus Christ need to accept some of the responsibility for solving injustices, and we need to realize that life's major problems must be solved by the individuals themselves. We believers can share our testimonies, can encourage others to read the scriptures, can give service, but each woman must build her own relationship with the Savior and with her own family.

I have felt the rage of women who have been held in low esteem for generations. I have been upset after asking a sister to do something only to have her respond, "Oh, my husband won't let me do that!" In my heart, I have thought, "Your husband won't let you? What kind of partnership is that?" or "Is this sister using her husband as an excuse?" I also feel sorry for men who feel they must dominate their wives to assert their priesthood. They are wrong. I feel sorry for women who let their husbands dominate them. They are wrong too. As President Kimball has said in addressing the men of the Church: "Our wives, mothers, daughters, sisters and friends are all the spirit children of our Heavenly Father. I hope we will always bear that in mind, my brothers, in terms of how we treat women. . . . Let us always remember that God is no respecter of persons, but he loves us all, men and women, boys and girls, with a perfect love."²

Some women in the Church are hurting as they cope with real or imagined prejudice and bias. Much can be done by bishops and stake presidents to counsel and give assurance to men and women as they build a better support system. Auxiliary presidencies need to be recognized for what they do. They should have an opportunity to address congregations and conferences, to be asked to sit on the stand, to be heard in the councils of the Church as true partners in the Kingdom. This is happening in some wards. I feel confident that it will happen in all wards as men and women become more sensitive to each other's needs. I believe that it is the responsibility of women to become more assertive in meeting their own needs. Too few understand the potential of the visiting teaching program. Too few spend time with the scriptures and

other good books in building their own testimonies. Our potential to love and to influence for good is tremendous! Not one spiritual blessing is denied us. As President Kimball told the women of the Church "Much of the growth that is coming to the Church in the last days will come because many of the good women of the world will be drawn to the Church in large numbers. This will happen to the degrees that the women of the Church reflect righteousness and articulateness in their lives and to the degree that women of the Church are seen as distinct and different, in happy ways . . . from the women of the world."³

My husband's experience as bishop of a singles ward has made us both more aware of the loneliness and alienation many are struggling with. At this stage in my life I am concerned with giving succor rather than in worrying about who is in charge. I believe that a woman commits herself to priesthood guidance only when that guidance is righteous. This is not a problem for me. Each of us, male and female, is entitled to personal revelation in keeping with our spiritual desires and in wrestling with the challenges of our lives.

I am not blind to the imperfections and hypocrisies we struggle with. But I have witnessed and experienced great blessings because of the priesthood. I appreciate and respect the army of priesthood bearers who do their best to further the work of the Lord. I also love and appreciate the army of women engaged in this work. Together we are partners in building the Kingdom.

NOTES

¹Betty Friedan, *The Second Stage* (New York: Summit Books 1981) p. 114.

²Spencer W. Kimball, "Our Sisters in the Church," *Ensign*, November 1979, pp. 49–50.

³Spencer W. Kimball, *My Beloved Sisters* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Pub. 1980), p. 44.

MORMON WOMEN SPEAK

I get such a feeling of exhilaration when I'm in front of a crowd and sharing things I believe in. I feel more influential with a group than one-on-one. With individuals or in small groups my inclination is to listen to them more and to be more questioning of what I think. I tend not to be as controlling or as anxious to influence. But when there's some distance between me and others it's very easy for me to make strong statements and to dig deep into myself and talk with real commitment about what I believe. It's just a great feeling.

Judith Rasmussen Dushku



Winners of the essay contest sponsored by *Dialogue* and by Olympus Publishing Co. of Salt Lake City and the Silver Foundation:

First Place: (\$200) *Judith Rasmussen Dushku* of Watertown, Mass.

Second Place: (\$100) *Maureen Ursenbach Beecher* of Salt Lake City, Utah

Third Place: (\$50) *Edna Laney* of Silver Spring, Maryland

Honorable Mention: *Jerrie Hurd* of Lake Oswego, Oregon; *L. Marlene Payne* of McLean, Virginia; *Karen Rosenbaum* of Berkeley, California.

A TIME OF DECISION

JUDITH RASMUSSEN DUSHKU

"YOU ARE 'PRO-CHOICE' AREN'T YOU?" mumbled the young legislator at his desk as he pored over my application. Anticipating my response, he wrote the label boldly across the front page. I asked why the label had to be so prominently displayed on my application for a seat on the Massachusetts Delegation to the White House Conference on Families.

"Come on," he replied sarcastically. "You know this game. When we had the state elections, the Pro-Lifers were so well organized they walked all over the delegate selection process. They bused in hundreds of voters every day. Almost all the delegates were from their slates. We checked them out. Some are reasonable people—an asset to the state—but some are real crazies. The Governor is upset. He is a Pro-Lifer, as you know, but he is embarrassed by this mob. Even he admits that the delegation needs balance. So now he wants a list to choose his appointees from. Probably he will name more Pro-Lifers, but he would like a list of decent minorities and decent Pro-Choice types to pick from. I just heard you were pregnant. Can I tell him? Pro-Choice and pregnant is easier to take than just Pro-Choice." He took a quick breath and began again.

"These right-wingers are so prepared for battle they had their buses loaded while we were still putting a staff together. I give them credit for enthusiasm, but they are the scariest people I've ever met. I'm a good Catholic with a clean Pro-Life record, but they call me names because I talk to people like you. Sorry—

"Anyway, *that* is why I have to know where you stand and I have to make it public." I started to protest but he went on. "Yeah, it's too bad. I know some people like to keep their thoughts on abortion to themselves. It's a heavy issue. But these days you have to take a stand—publicly.

"Hey, what's the matter? I thought you *were* a Pro-Choice person. Someone from NOW and from your university said you are a real civil-liberties type and a supporter of the State Women's Caucus. No?"

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Of course I am Pro-Choice, I reminded myself. Hadn't I always believed in freedom and agency for all? I had been teaching civil liberties to my political science classes for thirteen years, working hard to impress upon students the value of guaranteeing this freedom. It was a philosophy that had never embarrassed me. Although it is a hard principle to apply in all situations, I have never questioned it as a good and right goal. Moreover, it is a basic tenant of my religion. Growing up a Mormon I had been taught the principle of free agency, and I have always taken it seriously. People—all people—have the right and the responsibility to choose.

Yes, I had read President Kimball's strong statement on abortion, and I felt that I understood his counsel. A society that encourages abortions does tend to lose sight of the value of human life and does begin to feel less responsibility for the conceiving and the bearing of children. But I had never understood his counsel to negate individual agency.

"Of course," I responded firmly to the legislator. "Put my name on the top of your 'Decent Pro-Choice' list!"

Although I was not appointed by the Governor of Massachusetts, I was picked by a White House team from a pool of at-large nominees and sent to the Conference on Families in Baltimore in May 1980, where I associated myself with the Pro-Choice faction.

I liked most of them. They were good people, seemingly dedicated to improving institutions that affect family life. Although this group constituted a clear numerical majority at the Conference, it incurred the constant wrath of the vocal and critical "minority representing the Moral Majority" who claimed mistreatment at the hands of everyone else.

I met several Mormons at the Conference. They were tentatively friendly but suspicious of my lack of the identifying buttons or banners of the Moral Majority. I had counted on my maternity dress to endear me to them. When two fervent women asked me how I could possibly refrain from endorsing a like-minded people committed to "all" the same things "we" were, I replied, "I don't believe that they *are* committed to all of the goals of the Church. In fact, I see some of their efforts as *conflicting* with the goals of my church." One woman shook my hand and left. Another discussed points of disagreement for a few minutes, frowned as if she were sure the Spirit had departed my soul, then backed away with a promise to send me some literature. I was left to my thoughts.

My thoughts had to do with choosing—choosing the best as opposed to the better, the bad as opposed to the worst, choosing the great over the simply worthwhile.

Speakers at the Conference clarified some of my thoughts and confused others. Each proclaimed some policy as essential, and each was convincing. Once preliminary policy recommendations had been agreed to, I and the other delegates had to mark ballots showing whether or not we "agreed strongly," "agreed moderately," "disagreed strongly" or "disagreed moderately." At first I tried to imagine myself in the place of those making the proposals, but I soon gave up on that. It was hard enough to decide what I would do for myself.

The more I thought about these choices, the more agonizing the process seemed. I began to favor policies that enlarged the scope of choice. It seemed important that each human being have the right to make his or her own choices without interference.

A handicapped delegate took the floor to propose that the conference go on record as supporting laws in all states that would keep a handicapped person from being institutionalized, even temporarily, against his will. That seemed right. Handicapped people also have the right to choose. But the parent of a severely handicapped child spoke in opposition. He described his difficulties in rearing a family of six children with most of the money and energy spent on the one handicapped child. Because of the problems of transporting this child, the family had never taken a trip together, had never found a suitable place to leave the child or a suitable person to care for him.

"We need a break," this father said desperately. "Our child will never agree to stay in an institution, even for a few weeks. We need someone to take him—against his will—and we need the option of a family vacation!" That too was reasonable. I felt so sympathetic that I formulated a standard in my head: "The greatest number of choices for the greatest number of people."

Feeling comfortable with this, I realized that it would require decent, even inspired people to make right choices. In any system allowing a large number of options there will be selfish, careless people who will insist on hurting themselves and others. But I wanted to believe in the people with imagination and compassion who were capable of doing great things for themselves and others. But I also believed that all the creativity and good will in the world are useless without the freedom to exercise them.

Our group decided to vote against the proposal on the handicapped because it would destroy too many options.

As I had expected, many speakers raised abortion issues. Since in Massachusetts the subject had been part of a long and angry debate, I thought I had heard all arguments both for and against it. But the tough questions I thought I had answered long ago were before me again. Listening to the speakers, I secretly prayed I would never have to make the decisions some of them had faced. I was to remember that prayer.

A woman with a disabled husband and four children had taken a job the week her youngest entered first grade. With her first decent paycheck she rented an apartment larger than the three rooms they had occupied for eight years. For the first time she looked forward to a pleasant life with her family. Then unintentionally she became pregnant. Unable to obtain a legal abortion, she used her second paycheck to fly out of the country for an illegal one: "I knew my family could not stand the burden of another child."

This woman's decision reminded me of an exchange after a stake meeting. Joan A. had said how sad it was that Sister Y. had not known she was carrying a severely retarded baby, a baby that was now bringing great hardship to its family. A listening stake leader sternly reprimanded Joan for implying that there might have been a righteous alternative to having the child. His own sister had also borne a retarded child and had benefitted from the situation. "It has been a marvelous learning experience for the whole family," he said.

When questioned later, however, he admitted that in some ways this “learning experience” had been disastrous. The father suffered a nervous breakdown; the two children went into therapy; the mother lapsed into depression; and the couple finally divorced. The stake leader allowed that the family might have been spared these unfortunate things if it had not been blessed with a handicapped child.

I pursued the discussion. The spirit in the handicapped body could have entered a different body with an alternative set of blessings. Parents are obliged to do all they can to provide for the spiritual as well as the physical well-being of spirits entrusted to them. Just as a parent should take advantage of medical science to protect the health of a child after birth, so should that same parent take pains to provide the healthiest possible bodies for the spirits of the unborn.

The leader’s testimony was unmoved. The Lord had intended his sister to bear her handicapped child. But he admitted that he did find my speculations troublesome and discomfiting. When I thought of all three sisters at once—the one in Baltimore with the abortion, the one in our stake with the new baby, and the leader’s sister—I too was troubled.

During the rest of my time at the Conference, certain truths came to me forcefully and unexpectedly, with new and deeper meaning. In the past I had heard and had repeated to myself a whole set of judgments on the importance of having children, the greatness of blessings bestowed upon women who participate in the sacred process of giving birth. Somehow, however, my experience seemed rather routine. To be sure, I had regarded the birth of a child, mine or someone else’s, as miraculous, but I had never given the event the reverence I was now realizing it deserved. The addition of each child to our family had never required significant sacrifice on anyone’s part, I thought. Imagining other circumstances was shocking me into a new level of awareness. The preparation—physical and spiritual—that must often accompany the bringing of a helpless child into a hostile world can be arduous. It is important to use wisdom in choosing if and when to have a child at any time or place. Granted the standards for making wise judgments may change, wisdom must prevail. For the first time I realized that part of being a wise and a good mother was choosing when to have a child and how many children to have.

Thinking again of the stake leader’s sister, I found myself respecting her for her efforts to make the birth of the child a growth experience for herself and her family. But I realized too that I would have respected her if she had chosen *not* to bear the child, thus sparing them the trauma that followed. Life had never seemed so complicated! Motherhood especially had never seemed so serious and so difficult. Neither my motherhood nor anyone else’s motherhood was as simple as it had seemed.

I was exhausted. From childhood I had anticipated a time when I might be challenged to step over a line and be counted. I had imagined myself bounding boldly to the Right Side, confident and proud, firm in my convictions. At this conference, I had taken a stand consistent with my deepest convictions. But the dramatic stepping over the line was far less satisfying

than I had imagined. I found myself longing for the comfort of my private life.

Five days later I was home. Instead of comfort, however, I found a stormier scene than the one I had left in Baltimore. After a week with the children and a week away from me, my husband had confirmed for himself what he had hinted at earlier. We must *not* under any circumstances add the baby I was expecting to our large and demanding family. He was sure he could not take it. He was sure I could not take it. "Make an appointment with the doctor immediately and terminate the pregnancy," he insisted. "Neither you nor I can possibly devote the time and energy to our other children nor to each other that is required if we have another baby. You must do this for the family." Although my husband is not LDS, he reminded me that a basic principle of my faith is the preeminence of the family. I was ignoring that principle.

I burst into tears as he went on. "What about the position you so boldly defended at the Family Conference?" he demanded. "You have spent all this time and energy fighting for the right of a woman to an abortion. Now you have the chance to take advantage of that right."

What followed were the most agonizing days of my life. I spent hours examining doctrines, arranging priorities, trying to understand fears and to analyze anxieties. Since I am not one to suffer in silence, I shared my ambivalence with others, men and women, friends in and outside the Church. Often my cries brought demonstrations of support. Just as often I was censured for even thinking about aborting a fetus which some claimed was like "killing a child." These friends trusted me with a large number of confidences, their tales only adding to my unrest. Some had chosen to abort; others had chosen birth; some seemed sad or angry. Most of them were caring people with whom I felt real kinship of spirit.

I spent intense hours in prayer and intense hours with my bishop. I discussed my dilemma with two therapists and several doctors and nurses. My sympathetic bishop thought I was worrying in the right way. The Lord, the Prophet, and he, my bishop, were concerned with nothing less than my eternal welfare and that of my husband—indeed of my whole family, born and unborn. President Kimball's strongly worded cautions against aborting a fetus without careful, even agonizing thought and prayer, reminded me of my responsibilities. I was accountable. I could not abrogate that accountability.

Assuming that the problem of whether or not we could "handle another baby" might be less complicated if we could be assured of a normal one, I decided to undergo amniocentesis. This was intended to relieve my husband of anxiety about a handicapped child. While I found the test an intellectual delight (I am impressed with the technology of modern science), and the results delightful (I was carrying a healthy girl, our first after three sons)—my husband was not comforted. For him the issue was not the health of the child but the fact of the child itself. He and I are both forty years old. I teach fulltime at a university, and he teaches and counsels inner-city children who make enormous demands upon him. We have always been committed to

doing as much as we can not only for own children but for the students we daily serve. He could not be the parent he wanted to be and still fulfill his commitments at school. I could not argue; his reasoning was sound, but I was realizing openly what I had always known secretly: I could not abort this child. Why? I certainly did not believe that to abort a fetus was murdering a child. Yet it was clear that I had already projected a lifetime of dreams, of mother-daughter intimacies upon it, calling it by name and talking to it. Was it because this would be my first daughter after three sons? Was it because of my age and the feeling that the end of my child-bearing years was near? Did I want one final chance to savor and cling to this ability? Obviously one cannot equate the long, involved problems of child-rearing with the self-contained glories of childbirth. Was I responding to fantasies of ghostly pioneer role models? Was my eternal optimism getting the better of me, leading me to disaster? Occasionally I felt inspired. My daughter was to fill a special mission in life, a mission that had been entrusted to my stewardship.

But more often I just felt unsure. It was hard to insist to my husband that the Lord was influencing me. Was I simply afraid of abortion? Yes, but not extremely so. In one ambivalent moment, I even decided to make an appointment for abortion. When I went in to see the doctor about it, the nurse asked me why. I explained that my husband felt strongly about it. She wanted to know how I felt. I admitted that I was not exactly thrilled with the idea. But it had to be; I was resigned. After describing the details of the procedure, she said, "You are a poor candidate for an abortion—at least this one. My experience has convinced me that women should not choose abortion to please their husbands or anyone else. It ruins relationships." My mouth dropped open as she went on. "It builds future resentments. You would be setting your husband up as the thief, the one who deprived you of your joy."

"Does my joy show so much?" I whispered.

"It certainly does. And your feelings of happiness are an important reason to reconsider." Although she went on to apologize for interfering, she ended with an emphatic, "Don't do it!"

By then I was sobbing. I seemed to feel several emotions at once: sadness for my husband, guilt and remorse for our relationship, terror at what I had almost done.

And joy! I realized then that I adored my unborn child in ways I could not name. I felt sure that the next few years would be harder than the last year had been, but in a strange way I was glad.

Ambivalence was to return and sleepless nights, but the clarity of that moment was to sustain me. And as an LDS woman, I desperately wanted to know whether that moment was the result of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I earnestly prayed for this assurance.

Although my husband had always accompanied me to the delivery room and supported me there, he was not present for the birth of our little girl. For a few weeks after she and I returned from the hospital, he felt no genuine happiness in her presence. He finally warmed to her, though, and over the past months has fallen sincerely in love with her. But our year of animosity has left deep scars on our marriage, and I worry about our daughter, indeed

about our sons as well. Can we parents provide them with the spiritual sustenance they need?

Recently I met a man from the Massachusetts delegation to the White House Conference. "Ah, I remember you," he said. "You are the Pro-Choice lady."

Am I? I asked myself. Certainly I am a far different woman from the one he met in Baltimore, bruised and battered, but tougher, less naive yet less cynical.

Yes, I am still "Pro-Choice," I told him, but I now know that I am also "Pro-Life" and have been ever since that faraway time when I stood in the councils of heaven and actually volunteered for the suffering and the ambiguity of this earth.



BIRTHING

MAUREEN URSENBACH BEECHER

"TOMORROW WE'LL DO IT, THEN," said the obstetrician, peeling off his sterile gloves. "Call me at 7:30 to be sure the hospital can handle us." With a pat to my thigh intended to convey confidence and reassurance, he left the examining room. I would not see him again until the end had begun.

We had been together, he and I, more than just the nine months of this adventure. A hesitant, no longer young bride, I had weaseled my way into his already full practice with protestations that "if we're going to do it at all, we have to do it right away." He specialized in infertility, and somehow that made him worth the effort. At the pre-marital examination he had pronounced all in readiness, and then shocked sudden tears to my eyes with the announcement that "medically I should advise you not to have children." He recited statistics about Down's syndrome and older mothers, backing study with study, overwhelming me in those few moments with mathematics and the moral dilemmas concurrent with amniocentesis and IUDs, with abstinence and abortion. "Whatever you and your husband decide," he added, "I'll go with you."

Returning six months later, lab report in hand, the pregnancy "pos" box checked, I read in his face a practical mix of congratulation and dismay—how nice, but he really didn't need one more pregnant woman this month. The dismay faded with subsequent visits. We talked of his progenitors, Pratts and Romneys they were, from the Mexican colonies, and of my work in the Church's history division, writing accounts of just such stalwarts as his ancestors. Of the pregnancy there was little mention; things were "progressing nicely," and I was given to understand that the complaints that went with my condition were simply to be endured. Was I not, after all, a daughter of

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Eve in sorrow bringing forth my children, I thought angrily after one more visit diminished, again, my hopes for relief from the interminable nausea. "Doesn't the Bendectin work?" sympathized the nurse.

Now at last the pregnancy would be over. Back at my office I had cleared my desk before leaving for the appointment; colleagues there would be pleased not to see me tomorrow.

By eight the next morning we were at the admissions desk. "Yes?" asked a white starched nurse. "I'm here to have a baby," I explained. She led me off for the routines which hospitals impose on people who come there. I had never had an enema before.

By the time Dale had filed the admission forms with the computer-head of the hospital, I was gowned and bedded in a narrow room surrounded by a bank of monitors. Competent people began attaching me by various cords to the hospital machinery: the intravenous first, to my arm, then the plastic tube to my spine. I welcomed that one, having been reassured by my doctor that, since we were too busy for breathing lessons, and since he fully expected me to demand some anesthetic when it would be too late to inject it, why not plan on the epidural block. It will be nice, I thought, to be awake, but numb.

"Will you sign here, please," smiled the young resident as he pushed a clip board toward my I.V.'d arm. "Your doctor has agreed to let you be part of our study." I was getting used to being a guinea pig, but Dale had questions. "Oh, there's nothing experimental in the pill itself," the resident explained. "We just need to know how much dosage at what stage is best for inducing labor." Dale signed, I swallowed, and the process was made immediately irreversible, despite nervous jokes of "Are you sure you want to go through with this?"

From some intern's sleeve appeared a white plastic device resembling an outsized crochet hook. "Just to break the sac," he explained, as though invading private space were nothing at all. Two more cords wired me to the machinery of the system. The fetal monitor beeped encouragingly, and, hardly minutes after my ingestion of the pill, the swinging arm of the second monitor began to indicate contractions. "Here comes one," Dale would say. "Shut up," I thought. The pain surged through my abdomen, swelling to an intensity I had never experienced, then relenting. "Just tell me when it starts to peak out, will you?" I hoped that he wouldn't feel rejected that I didn't want his warnings. Bonding between husband and wife during labor was important, the book had said.

In the spaces between, I tried to think of other things, but birthing will not be upstaged. The scene from a B-rated movie played across my thoughts, an Indian woman, crouching and grunting in a cove of aspen and then emerging impossibly soon after, her child bundled in her skirts, to present her son to his father. Too neat, I thought. Then I remembered another Indian birthing story that seemed, in comparison, genuine. In a lecture series on women's issues, a Navajo nurse-social worker had been an invited panelist. I recalled nothing of her assessment of the medical problems of Indian women, but remembered having been deeply moved by her account, told and retold in familiar ways, of the birth of her father.

It was so different then, there, to that mother, Hasbah, birthing her fourth child in a hogan. None of the impersonal white sterility of this hospital, none of the tubes and wires which even now linked me to systems I might never need. Only the red cord sash which the medicine man had tied to the sacred west beam of the hogan for Hasbah to cling to when the pains came hard.

None of the white-suited mob of unknown faces as here; instead her oldest daughter, watching over the coffee can boiling on the oil drum stove, assuring the cleanliness of the pocket knife with which the cord would be cut, the string with which it would be tied; her husband, in and out of the hogan as he dug the oval hole in the dirt floor in front of the sheepskins which were the delivery mat; her mother, rubbing between her hands the cedar bark—soft, very soft, for the baby's diaper—and placing it on the sheepskin blanket; Old Man Manygoats, his blessingway chants, slow, monotonous, rhythmic, singing the baby out. And finally, her uncle, his strong arms around her waist giving gentle downward pressure. Everyone loved and loving, each involved intimately in the event now taking place on the birthing mat. Another contraction, a hard one; Hasbah grabbed the sash belt. Her mother coached her on. She grunted as she pushed again. She let her baby come gently, her mother helping, expert and smooth with her hands. A son. The vigorous cry filled the hogan. The grandmother laid the baby in the fluffy sheepskin. She wiped his face and back. Old Man Manygoats sang the chant of the corn pollen boy. Grandmother cut the cord and tied it. She wrapped the baby and gave him to his mother's breast.¹ My eyes teared in anticipation of my own coming moment.

"She's crowning!" bellowed the nurse, having once more invaded that space no longer private. "Where's the doctor?" "Didn't *you* call?" "Oh, damn." "Well, let's take her into delivery."

By the time Dale returned, gowned and scrubbed, I was lost in my own body, in a world I had never known so well. The epidural block had not worked—it had seemed odd that deadened pain should be so fierce—but I was above caring. I felt the muscles move to my command. I pressed, relaxed, and pressed again, moving all the world in my own belly. I felt the baby press, I panted "not yet," I held him for the moment, confined in the birth canal, while some functionary did his thing with the scalpel. He signalled his completion of the episiotomy. Now! I opened, pressed, and eased my child from the moist darkness of my body into the dry brightness of this unfriendly world. We would meet later, I promised, and I would make it up to him.

They whisked him away, out of range of my astigmatic vision. Across the room I could make out wild thrashing arms and legs in the isolette. "Go at it, baby. You've waited a long time for that."

I was glad the delivery room crew had other things to do, that Dale had other places to look. The grin on my face, I knew, must be grotesque. I wrapped my arms around myself and closed my eyes. Dale left to share his happy news at the office.

The recovery room nurse was a soul from the past, ministering supreme in this roomful of women. A nineteenth-century midwife, I mused to myself, as she calmly went from mother to newer mother with her homely comforts,

her warm messages. The lace of her Mormon garment through the white uniform seemed somehow anachronistic—Patty Sessions would have had plainer. But her ministrations were as caring as those of the midwife.

She could have delivered my baby, I thought, remembering other midwives I had read about. It would have been comforting to have spent a confinement among such women, to have been blessed by them. A sacred washing and anointing of women before their delivery had been common even up to the time of my own birth. I wondered if warm Relief Society hands had pressed their blessings on my mother's modest body, if the fetus that was to become me had felt the surge of spirit from those sacred words.

I had earlier found the text of such a blessing, carefully penned into a Relief Society minutes book nearly a century ago. There at my desk in the church archives, cars humming by outside my window, I had read the blessing. Parts of it reverberated now:

. . . we wash you preparatory to your safe delivery and speedy recovery, for life, health, salvation, for yourself and your offspring, asking God the Eternal Father that His holy spirit may attend this ordinance.

There were blessings for each member of the body, for each function, all articulated in a blend of the practical and the sublime utterance:

. . . that every cord and muscle may be strong and healthy, that the marrow of your bones [be] warmed up by the spirit of God. . . . That your heart might be comforted and that no cold might settle upon [your] bosom and that your milk may be pure and filled with nourishment.

Anticipating what had been a most serious threat to my sisters in the past, the blessing prayed against premature delivery.

that [your womb] might be strengthened and the ligaments thereof that it may retain what is there-in deposited to its full time and bring forth in perfection.

How easily such concepts had slipped from the lips of nineteenth-century Saints: perfection was for the gods, I had often reminded myself.

We ask that your child might be perfect in every limb and joint and muscle . . .

And so would he be, my child?

That it might be beautiful to look upon, that its nerves may be strong, that it may be happy in its spirit, . . . that it may be free from spot or blemish, that it may be filled with faith from its mother's womb.²

The holy blending of the magnificent and the mundane that is a woman's blessing had poured over me, and I felt the strength of sharing, the continuity

of sisterhood. The office secretary, poking her head into my alcove, had wondered at the water on my cheeks. Someday I would tell her of the washings of love which span decades.

Now, ecstatic beyond sleep, I was moved readily back to my room, watching, as I passed, my name being erased from the blackboard now filled with names of others in a long listing of delivery room comings and goings. In the bed adjacent lay my roommate. Two beds opposite were empty. After not much preliminary talk with my neighbor I sensed some deep grief beyond her telling. When the nurse arrived with the woman's baby, I knew. "She doesn't look funny, does she?" the mother pleaded. The lower ears, the slanted eyes. "No, of course not," I answered. I did not lie. She had a newborn loveliness that Down's syndrome could not alter. The baby's father came in, in his bishop's voice playing out complacencies about this "special angel," this seventh child whose difference neither parent had in the slightest anticipated. He left his wife uncomforted.

Into the evening we talked, she and I. I had read some things she needed to know, and she had some fear, some anger, but mostly a bottomless sorrow which she could barely speak. To be a mother so many times, secure in her skills, and then to find herself dependent on a nurse to be taught how to feed a child who cannot synchronize the sucking with the swallowing. She was where I was, having to learn firsthand the mother things.

Underneath it all, the talking and listening, lay in me an urgency which finally burst out. "Oh, I wish they'd bring my baby!" I cried. "Why didn't you say?" my new friend replied. "I'll call the nursery for you."

George came in with the wheeled crib. Our friend, as well as pediatrician, he was a welcome sharer in this first holding of my first born. "He's beautiful," George announced, "and normal." Then, in very doctory tones, he instructed, explained, assured. Touching the baby's hand in parting, he hesitated. "Maureen, look," he said. "This line on his palm is continuous. Downs babies often have that." Tears sprang. Through many months afterward I would caress that line, reminded of the healthy mind with which our Daniel had been blessed, of how easily it could have been otherwise.

George left, my roommate turned to sleep, and the nursery attendant, after a brisk warning not to risk falling asleep with the baby in my arms, left us. Now at last, was the moment of my peace. The nameless child fit himself into the crook of my arm as he had so many months nested in the warmth of my womb. Only now there was no squirming, no jabbing of leg or arm, no eagerness for separation. Oh, this is better, we seemed to say to each other. And I resented the others, the everpresent others, who had until now kept us from this moment.

Why the coldness of it all, why the white sterility, the metallic intrusions into our process? The machines, the strangers, the unfamiliar walls. Reason intervened: what if things had not gone so well? What if you needed instruments? or oxygen? How many babies had been saved because of the warnings of a fetal monitor? Or delivered Caesarean when things went wrong? Infant mortality among nineteenth-century Mormon women was about ten percent; the facts injected themselves into my reverie.

The midwives, for all their comforting presence, had been helpless in so many cases. Juanita Brooks had written of Grandma Leavitt, midwife in the remote Mormon community on the Arizona strip. The birthing was not going well, once, and there was no earthly help beyond the midwife's own experience. Theresa Leavitt provided the details:

Grandma was called to Littlefield to take care of Alice Strausser Knight, wife of Edward Knight, with her first baby. She could see that she must have help, so she sent Theresa for some Elders, and she brought back the two Frehner brothers, Albert and Henry.

They administered to her, but still things were not working right, so she sent Theresa to get Harmon Wittwer and Parley Hunt who were camped by the school house on their way north with a load of salt. It was in the middle of the night, but Theresa woke them and told them they were needed badly over at Knight's.

Now there were four men all holding the Melchizedek Priesthood kneeling around her bed and asking for the Lord's help. Grandma said she wanted every one to take part in prayer, one after another, and not to stop praying until this child is born.

Only one or two had prayed when she stopped us. "Something is wrong here," she said. "Someone in this group has hard feelings against each other, and I want them to make it right so that we can be united and the Spirit of the Lord made manifest and this child can be born."

No one said a word for a few seconds, and then brothers Albert and Henry Frehner got to their feet and said they had a bitter quarrel that day, and were not speaking to each other. They stood there and with tears in their eyes asked each other's forgiveness.

Then they all kneeled again, and the praying went on, but not for long. These two brothers had hardly finished before the baby was born.³

That was the backup support, I realized. Priesthood. And I had known that, too. Early in the pregnancy, when the nausea was preventing me from the level of productivity my work required, Dale had blessed me through his priesthood privilege. I had already learned to listen carefully to his words—they were short, simple and, experience had demonstrated, either inspired or confirmed from above. This blessing, going beyond what I thought was my need—to be able to do my work—pronounced almost as an afterthought that "the baby is healthy." That was all, but it was enough. Fears of Down's syndrome left me, and I was free for the rest of my term to anticipate in peace the birth of my normal baby boy. Amniocentesis could have told as much, I realize, but this was better for me. My own intuition—I had not even bothered listing girls' names among the boys'—and Dale's pronouncement had replaced mystery with knowledge, fear with comfort.

So this was birthing, this crazy-quilt of contrasts, of senses and feelings in chaos, coming occasionally to rest, as now, with a sleeping son in the crook of my arm. Had I won the grand prize? or was there a bigger and better one behind another curtain? Hasbah, Alice Knight, the women washed and anointed, the ones with surgical deliveries, my roommate, did they have it

better? or even different? So much we had shared: the sisterhood of women at birthing times; the practical rituals, pleasant or unpleasant, necessary or unnecessary; the religious rites and their invoking of the divine; our private moments of self-knowledge, when, by whatever process, our bodies have borne their burden; and the public acknowledgement of the oneness of the human family.

And I had known it all. Had experienced the sisterhood, had participated in a ritual as old as seeding wheat, had sensed the link, to powers beyond my own, had found my own soul, had felt God.

NOTES

¹Ursula Wilson, "Tom Knocki, Son of Hasbah," from a panel presentation 20 November 1975 in "Utah Women: Roots and Realities" series. Notes in the author's files.

²Oakley Second Ward Relief Society Minutes, 1901–1910, Church Archives, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

³Theresa Leavitt, as quoted in Juanita Brooks, "Mariah Huntsman Leavitt. Midwife of the Desert Frontier," in *Forms upon the Frontier: Folklife and Folk Arts in the United States*, edited by Austin Fife, *et al.* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1969), pp. 125–26.

THE LAST PROJECT

EDNA LANEY

IN OUR MANY YEARS together Bert and I faced many trials, but working together, we managed to bring to successful conclusion all the projects that come with a good marriage. We raised seven children while budgeting for college and missions. (Our sixth missionary was in the field; our sixth college student was at BYU.) We had made the gospel a vital and important part of our lives, had endeavored to be active in the community and to spread the light of Christ wherever we were. Because Bert was a statistician, each project had been carefully planned and executed as near to the plan as possible. But now we would need all the faith and courage we could muster for our final project. As he leaned against the pillows and smiled at me, I returned his smile. Though I was filled with terror at the thought of life without him, I knew his need for comfort was greater than mine, and so my chin never even quivered.

With paper and pencil he began the planning. It was a familiar routine. He tried to cover all possibilities, to plan for every contingency. His first impulse had been to keep his condition a secret, but that would mean evasion, even outright lies. After some thought, we decided it would be easier for us to tell the truth. So we sat close together and worked on the plans for what he came to call, "Our honeymoon in reverse." Instead of knitting our lives together, we would now begin to unwind the strands and go our separate ways. My smile grew stiff, but his pencil never wavered.

"I've been trying to show people how a Latter-day Saint lives. Now I will show them how one dies," he said. I went to my next door neighbor and asked her to tell the other neighbors. I called the other children; I wrote to our missionary son and we informed the Bishop and special friends.

We both agreed that the hospital, with its emphasis on life at any cost, with its needles, tubes and machines, would only prolong his suffering. I shuddered at the thought that I could be prevented from sharing his final moments by some well meaning doctor or nurse. So with our own doctor's

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approval, we made plans to keep him at home. Bert worried about the problems I might face, but I was able to convince him that I was strong enough to stand the stress. Besides, we belonged to a ward full of loving hands eager to do anything for us.

In the days that followed we made many decisions. We made our wills. He wished to be buried in his home town of St. George, Utah, so we went to the mortuary to make funeral arrangements. He selected pall bearers and the speakers for the program; then he went on leave from his office and resigned other official duties. He cleaned out drawers and files. I bought his burial clothes and read countless books on death, dying and the problems of widowhood. We were still working our shift at the temple, though, because he wanted to continue as long as he could. In the meantime, we tried to make life as normal as possible.

During all this time Bert never said, "Why me?" He seemed to be entirely willing for God's will to be done. In his methodical fashion he made himself ready for what was to come. He never ceased to thank the Lord for his blessings and to ask for help and strength.

As Christmas neared, we prepared for the holidays partly by reciting a riddle: "What do you give a man for Christmas when he is dying?" We both thought about this for awhile. Bert's answer: "Vanishing Cream." I bought him an SX-70 camera (no waiting to develop the pictures) and then, after much thought, I gave him scriptures on tape. It would make it easier for him when he became too weak to hold a book.

Our many long talks brought us closer in mind and purpose than we had ever been before. We told each other things that in the ordinary course of life we might never have said. Each day was filled with special purpose. Each hour, each act had vital meaning. Each evening I said, "Will you be here tomorrow?" and he replied, "I think so." Each morning one of us would remark, "Well we have another day together."

Strangely enough, we were not depressed. Our home was a place of faith, hope, love and even laughter. Once, when I brought in an armload of his clean shirts, he looked at them and said, "Golly, that's enough shirts to last me the rest of my life." When he realized what he had said, we both managed to laugh.

One of the intimate customs of our married life was my habit of grabbing Bert hard and proclaiming dramatically, "You are my prisoner, and you cannot get away." One day when I playfully pinned his poor bony shoulders to the bed, he gave me a sly wink, and said "Oh, yes I can." Once when we were wrangling, amiably, over something I had proposed to do, he said, laughing, "Over my dead body." I burst into tears.

While discussing arrangements for the funeral, he asked me if I thought I should leave for St. George the same day and bury him the next. I said I thought we had better stay over a day because we would all be dead by the time we got there. "Like me?" he asked.

Some of my friends counseled me. "Never let him see you cry," but I wanted him to know I cared deeply, so I watered his chest nearly every day

until the withdrawal stage. Then I tried not to intrude on his thoughts which were no longer of me or of this world.

Christmas came and most of the children were home. It was a happy time, with a great thread of sadness through everything we did. Bert joined us as much as he could. He would be up for a few moments and then would retreat to his bed, only to come out again a few minutes later. We tried to keep everything the same: the Christmas Eve program, the big Christmas dinner (with three desserts) and the visits from friends.

Bert took the opportunity to have a private interview with each child, giving each a father's blessing recorded on tape. He also made a tape for each of the absent boys. One evening he had interviews with the grandchildren, beginning with the oldest teen age girl and moving down to the youngest, a year-old boy. To those old enough to understand, he talked about death. He told them that he had been called to work for the Lord on the other side of the veil. Assuring them of his continued love, he promised that wherever he was he would think of them and look out for their welfare. The tiny ones were given last hugs and kisses from the grandfather they would one day be unable to remember.

Soon it was time for the children to go. Words cannot describe the feelings of each as final kisses were given, hugs, loving words, a last reluctant closing of the door. Bert braced himself in the bay window as each car with its precious cargo faded from sight. One last wave and he went off to bed. From then on we were alone.

It soon became apparent that Bert would have to train his replacement at the temple. The day he cleaned out his locker and took "indefinite leave," we walked out arm in arm. "It is the end of an era," I said. He looked straight ahead, too overcome to speak. We sat a moment in the car looking at the temple through the windshield. Then slowly, wearily, he put the car in motion. It was the last time he would drive a car.

When President Eames came to the house to present a certificate of release from the temple, Bert held the paper in his hands and stared at it, an omen he could not ignore. "The time is getting close," he said. "When you are released from one position, they do not wait long to give you a new assignment." From then on he would frequently say, "I wonder what my new assignment will be," or "I wonder where they will send me." One day he said, "Would you be frightened if you woke up some morning and found me dead?" I said, "Of course not." I hadn't been resting much before; now it became almost impossible to close my eyes.

Each day he grew thinner and weaker, but he fought to live. He spent much time trying to force down food. He would take a bite and tell me how bad he felt that he could not eat it. We had made a pact that we would try not to keep things from each other. Now we broke the agreement. I failed to tell him that the dryer was out of order. He tried to convince me that he was not hungry and was feeling only mild discomfort.

About this time friends began to bring messages for loved ones on the other side. He would listen carefully to each message, promising that if he saw the deceased ones, he would surely remember to tell them what was said.

And then he worried that he might not be able to remember all the messages. I encouraged him by assuring him that he was still mentally competent.

Many friends who came to console left inspired and uplifted. Still we had our dark moments and times of despair. We were praying each day for his release. Death became our all consuming wish. It hurt so to see him suffer, but he never complained. To me he would admit to having "discomfort," but to those who came to see him he was always, "Just fine."

Since our doctor was in Baltimore, I suggested that he make out the death certificate in advance and send it to me. I would fill in the day and hour. When the certificate came, Bert spent quite a long time reading it. He said, "Not many men get to read their own death certificate." He asked for a mirror to study his skeleton face. I agreed that I would not care to meet such a face, suddenly, some dark night. He named himself "Boneypart." I could now put my thumb and middle finger about his wrist.

Bert was still in charge, though he refused to let me get a nurse. He struggled to the bathroom; he forced himself into the tub each day. He said it made him feel better. I did him the courtesy of allowing him to do whatever he wished. With my help he managed to care for himself until the day before he died.

He often said how glad he was that he was home and not in the hospital. He would call me the best nurse in the world, and would add, "I hate to be a nuisance," or "You must be getting tired of taking care of me." When he finally offered to go to the hospital, I assured him that I would rest when his time had come. When I reminded him that this was our last project and that we would see it through together, he sighed with relief.

I do not pretend it was not hard, but there was a spirit in our home that brought confidence and peace to our hearts. He talked about his parents and expressed a wish that he might be "home" for his birthday, the first of March. I could see he was moving away from me emotionally just when I needed comfort more than ever. His mind was fixed on the world to come. He had reached the withdrawal stage. Because of what I had read, I understood it, but in many ways found it the hardest to bear.

Finally, he was in so much pain that I was giving him shots of morphine every few hours, and he was now too weak to lift his head from the pillow. I bathed him and changed the sheets. I cut the neck of a white shirt and put it on him. It made a passable bed gown. I had removed his garments and put away his slippers. We both knew he would not be out of bed again. When I finished I leaned over and kissed him. "We haven't far to go now," I said. "It is almost finished."

"I'm ready," he replied. He stared at the ceiling and then at the clock.

"What are you looking for?" I asked. He did not reply. I knew he was watching for someone to come for him. Finally he seemed to sleep.

It was evening again as I sat in the living room talking to my stake president. The couch faced the stairs and hall. A dim light filtered out of the bedroom. Suddenly I saw the hall fill with forms. One of them beckoned to me. I excused myself and went up the stairs. The hall and bedroom were filled with forms who moved aside as I neared the bed.

Bert was gasping, his eyes closed. I took his hand. I thought of the others downstairs but decided that this was a moment for just Bert and me and those almost unseen guests who were there to welcome him. He struggled for breath. Twice he seemed to stop breathing but then resumed his pitiful wheezing. When I heard a rattle, a gurgle in his throat, I knew what it was. I had read about it in books. Dry eyed, I held his hand while he breathed his last, feeling triumph that we had successfully completed our last project together.

I said, "You are dead now, Honey. You've made it." I stood for what seemed a long time and talked to him, sure that he could hear all I said and all that I thought. Then I went to tell my guests that he would be home for his birthday.

His agony was over, but mine would continue. Now I began to understand why old people often die soon after a companion is taken. I see why it is possible for some who lack a firm faith to do away with themselves. But I struggle to remain filled with faith. I try to see that his cruel death had special meaning and purpose for us both.

Bert and I made plans for my life without him. He wanted me to finish college and do the traveling I loved. He set standards of faith and bravery that I find hard to reach. Now, as I study and travel and continue my work in the temple, I strive to fill my life with interesting projects. I try to think of ways to help others. There is so much I have learned; there is so much more I must learn. With Bert's example before me and the gospel to guide me, I cannot fail.



LORETTA RANDALL SHARP

For Linda

1. The Viewing

If only there were daisies here in tin cans.
These flowers are too nice: ivory-tongued anthurium,
gladiola mouths holding their long, red O's
while Sister Smith whispers, "Aren't the roses
something? They'll open at the cemetery."
And she goes on: both legs broken, neck snapped,
steering wheel right through your ribs.

The mortician had left them alone, she says.
He'd handled a Mormon funeral before, in Detroit.
And your spirit hovered near the three old women
called to dress you. They felt it

while they stretched garment strings, pulled
white nylons over legs pieced together in plastic
bags. What lifting to fit you into that white
dress, to tie the apron just right. They've patted
you into place, tidy as the bread you daily baked.

The sister smooths the robe, fluffs the bow.
How she must have worked, her fingers coaxing
yours to an attitude of rest. Tomorrow's time
enough for the just to rise; today you're ready
for viewing.

2. The Services

The meetinghouse fills. Did you know every Jack-Mormon in Michigan? The bishop tells us you never uttered a cross word—you could scold him so he should know the mortician drained blood yesterday. Already, bigger than life is better than life.

The family's here (all but the minister-father who preached all things pure to the pure in heart and abused his daughters). Your brother, the first Mormon among them, bows his head. His wife never accepted your lack of restraint, but she cries.

Even your coming into the church was unrestrained. So evidently pregnant the elders thought you properly married. And you said yes, the divorce final, the new marriage made, when your brother flew in to baptize you. A year later the stake president called for a long interview. Baptized as though bearing the name of the man in your home and now wanting to go to the temple.

You called your brother then to explain it all. How could his wife know that sins, though scarlet, would be white as snow? Whiter even than the putty of your face. The freckles never showed so before.

And then all those babies. Eleven times, yeasty as the loaves of bread you kneaded. Seven sons from such risings, the newest seven months old.

This is not moderate, your going so.

3. The Dedication

We do not have enough processional flags. More people drive to the township cemetery than are buried there. The maples are still yellow, but everyone says snow is in the air.

A Mormon can dedicate a grave in less than three minutes and leave you to loose soil. I'll come back tonight and gather the fat roseblanket, all these wreaths. But I will not bring daisies. The maples will be enough. And the wind that testifies a presence by the space it leaves when passing through.

ANITA TANNER

Divided

His call came dressed
In honor
As the President grasped
For a handshake,
Cuff link to cuff link
Across a varnished desk.
Untried image fit
As did dark suits,
Stiff collars, ties;
Department:
Sunday perennial best.
I wore feminine esteem
Quite well that year.
(The woman behind the man)

Sequent pregnancies,
On time installments
I iron his shirts,
Stitch priscillas,
Waver
Between diapers, homework,
Relay his messages,
Bottle orbs of peaches,
Baby riding my hip.
Like a wall-hung sergeant
The ringing phone
Policies our premises,
Crisis and query
Inundate the bulletin.

I sit alone
On the bench
With our six and the stress
Of quieting—
His occasional smile
Deigns
From the podium.
(He looks so *USELESS* up there.)
Appendage-like
I band us homeward.
Downhall,
Outside his carpeted cubicle,
“Do-Not-Disturb” shimmer
Awaits the clergy click.

ANITA TANNER was raised on a farm in Star Valley, Wyoming. She attended Brigham Young University majoring in English and is now affiliated with the Utah State Poetry Society.

EMMA LOU THAYNE

Old Woman Driving

She lives on a street of white haired men
with time for hosing the cracks.

She goes to funerals amid people
whose names she cannot remember,
only the places they sat
once.

The necessary, fierce details,
where are they?

She files ruthlessly through what
she knows was there:
the word for rapture, what it means
to wait too long for a door,
the idioms of love, the caterpillars
of doubt, his brown hair,
new driveways.

EMMA LOU THAYNE is presently working on five different books, among them a novel and a collection of poetry.

Only to find when steering past agitation
down the repaved street
where she was born,
the music of unwarped vision.

Retrieving without need, she obtains
the name for dandelion
and Daniel
and denial.

Way past the washings
of self disdain:
Beyond the pale comradery
of old men comparing fertilizers
and hubcaps:

At the wheel
she is taken everywhere by surprises
familiar as the taste
of warm white bread.

I am consumed by beauty.

But it is not envy
nor even desire
that engages me: All
is a lifting
by the tongues of bells

Here. Now.

Toes buttocks fingers instincts
tingle with places to hold
and take off from

knowing for once

How!

DANCE

MAIDA

WHEN THE RELIEF SOCIETY PRESIDENCY of the Arlington Ward canceled their officers meeting to attend an avant-garde concert, it was in the interest of sisterhood. One of their own, Maida Rust Withers, was performing the American premiere of *Stall*, a collaborative work of dance, sound sculpture (Phillip Edelstein) and music (John Driscoll) at the Pension Building, a stately government relic (circa 1882) in Washington, D.C. This performance was part of the "9th Street Crossing Multi-Media Festival," a prestigious collection of East Coast companies and experimental artists, of which Maida Withers' Dance Construction Company was the single Washington entry.

This latest in a crescendo of successes was won on a shoestring budget, hard work and clear-eyed dedication to an art form little understood in Mormon circles but perfectly suited to the pioneer fortitude and energy of the woman Pulitzer Prize-winning critic Alan Kriegsman called a "forty-four-year-old human juggernaut in the force of wit, stamina, and intelligence."* The crowd almost filled the cavernous rotunda of the slightly remodeled high-ceilinged building. Though not all understood the language of modern dance,

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they felt its vitality and shared its electricity. All paid tribute to this "tall and rangy" woman with the "face of a wagonmistress, an incredible shock of charcoal-ash hair with limbs as long as her body, choreographer, company director, impresario, prophetess, teacher."^{*}

Maida began her exploration of "the byways of dance" in the country roads of Salem, Utah, where she was the youngest of eight in a strong Mormon family. She was introduced to dance as an art through her teacher at Brigham Young University, Gerri Glover, who encouraged her to choreograph and to participate in summer workshops with professional dance artists in various locations throughout the United States. At these workshops she studied with modern dance greats Hanya Holm, Merce Cunningham, Anna Halprin, Martha Graham, Louis Horst and Alwin Nikolais.

After BYU, she taught at Ricks College for one year, where she met her husband Lawrence Arlen Withers, and then returned to the University of Utah for an M.A. in dance. After three years of teaching, dancing and acting at Purdue University, she accepted a post at Howard University in Washington, D.C. "I can't believe this actually happened, but I arrived at Howard without knowing it was a black school." She compensated, however, by joining in the marches down Pennsylvania Avenue with Martin Luther King and fully participating in other civil rights demonstrations of the sixties. In 1965, after the birth of her first child, Kristin, she joined the faculty of George Washington University where she is now Associate Professor of Dance.

A former student at GW and a founding member of the Dance Construction Company, Brook Andrews, described Maida's unusual accomplishments in a speech at the Renwick Gallery on April 5, 1981, where she was honored by the Metropolitan Dance Association:

Maida has a direct link to her feelings. With this rich, immediate source of material—and with boundless fortitude—she has produced an overwhelming amount of powerful, creative work ranging from pure choreography to pure improvisation. Performers develop myriad ways of solving problems during rehearsals until a final form evolves that answers the needs of the dance. Remembering movement is never difficult since performers share in the creation and evolution of the work.

This Withers methodology was used to create the full-length piece entitled "White Mansions," which began in improvisations based on the characters and history of the South, and was first performed as part of the inaugural exhibit at the Washington Project for the Arts in 1975, and finally became an environmental work performed at dusk in the Holy Rood Cemetery in Georgetown. A vibraphone chimed mysteriously in the wind while ashen figures in white conducted rituals and meandered through tombstones. The setting, sunset, movement, costumes and sounds all worked in beautiful and eerie harmony. The power of all elements meshing together to create a sum far greater than its parts has become a familiar, yet constantly surprising phenomenon in Maida's work.

Not content to repeat works, she is always starting on the next composition. She cannot keep herself from altering or reformulating. One work of hers that has been repeated, reconstructed and restaged several times is her duet, 'Laser.' It was based, as its title implies, on the qualities of lasers—narrow, reflected

^{*}*Ibid.*

light beams slicing through space. The choreography consists of dancers in linear configurations of support and release combined with quick, traveling patterns set excitingly in an environment of laser beams built by sculptor Rockne Krebs.

Or maybe you remember "Put on the Music—Let's Dance," a full evening's work based on music of the thirties and forties; or three crazy dancers in white crawling through the Iwo Jima monument in Arlington while video cameras recorded it all; or "Yesterday's Garlands and Yesterday's Kisses," wherein zany figures cavort and convulse in dramatic gestures while a woman sings nonsense syllables while suspended in a chair fifteen feet above the stage.

As impressive as her choreography is her work with the National Endowment for the Arts as a movement specialist for the "Artist in the Schools" program. Her enthusiasm and joy make dance come alive for hundreds of children and educators throughout the country.

As an educator spreading her love for and commitment to dance; as an incisive choreographer; as an astonishing performer; as an inventive collaborator with artists from many disciplines—sculptors, musicians, poets, singers, painters—in creating a climate for interchange and learning, Maida has provided Washingtonians countless opportunities to partake of high-caliber dance. Her contribution to the artistic community of this city is unrivaled.

And that's not all. She's also a loving and caring wife, and mother of four terrific children; devoted friend; amusing playmate; staunch ERA activist; and inspiring companion. What an exciting woman!

Attempting to transfer a dance to paper is almost as suspect as paraphrasing a poem, but through the superb photography of Dennis Deloria* and Maida's own eloquent words, we can suggest both the kinetic excitement of dance as well as its considerable intellectual power. We have chosen "Woman See," a work of historical and anthropological content more accessible to general audiences than some of her abstract works. A dance event in eight parts with music, narrative and mixed media (film and slides), it becomes an inside view of the sensual, tender and deep feelings of the woman artist. The flute and cello music played live during the performances bridges the dance and the slide-films. A tribute to women, it received enthusiastic acclaim when it was danced by Maida and these five members of her company: *Dale J. Crittenberger*, a graduate of GW who has studied in New York with Alvin Ailey, Natalie Richmond and the New York School of Ballet; *Kim Curtis*, formerly with the Washington Ballet and the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, currently with the Arlington Youth Ballet; *Jeffrey Strum*, recipient of the first degree in Performing Arts from the American University, and a veteran who has danced with several companies during a ten-year stint in New York; *Heather Tuck*, graduate of Sarah Lawrence, who has taught, choreographed and danced at the University of Iowa for five years; and *Frances Babb* from Ballet West in Salt Lake City, Utah.

*Though DENNIS J. DELORIA is a psychologist and writer at the Department of Health and Human Services, his first love is dance and theatre photography. His work has appeared on posters and flyers, in newspapers and exhibits in Michigan, Washington, New York and Baltimore.

“Woman See” by Maida Withers

I did not just sit down and say, “This is going to be a dance in eight parts.” It evolved. When I was finishing the choreography, I visited Josephine Withers (no relation), an historian of women’s art, at the University of Maryland and went through her collection of slides. I wanted to project some of these slides on a large, inflated weather balloon suspended above the dance space. The balloon has the color and texture of human skin, like a breast or a womb, and is very sensual. It also gives the impression of a crystal ball with the film images suspended inside.

“Woman See” begins with a film of me dancing in a vital, ethereal manner in a flesh-colored leotard. I wanted to suggest the unashamed and pure female rendered without character or role through the dance movement of life. So I began with that, and ended “Woman See” with me dancing on film also, but with more complex movement. These two parts are called “Commencement” and “Recommencement” meaning *you are and you are*. You are not just a mother or wife or writer but a continuum. Women have historically relied on their intuitive powers, and so through dance improvisation I wanted to suggest that sense of interior trust, the use of instinct in making choices.

As the first film concludes, the dancers are clustered in a group with quietness and strength, hovering near the floor, coiling and recoiling. I wanted to pay tribute to my feelings about the body whether animal or human, as a high form of intelligence, perhaps even a superior form of intelligence, like that of large cats interacting in animal family groups.

A duet emerges called “Journey in Innocence,” basically an Adam-Eve stage we all go through at some time. When we are first married, for instance, we try out various roles and test new relationships. We follow and we lead. I took the Adam and Eve concept of an environment with no understanding yet of sexuality, anger or joy, a protective state without pain or labor, without risk or responsibility.

PART I: COMMENCEMENT

Like creation, it began with the male squatting and the female hovering over him. He begins to find his breath and finally penetrates the space vertically, defies gravity and stands. The whole duet is beautiful and tender but with no emotion. They begin a journey. The journey leads to new understanding and new realities. He carries her on his back; she pushes him forward. Throughout the duet the woman is behind the man. They recline.

As they recline, the other dancers enter in overt physical gestures with much pelvic movement and sexual implications. They dance over the bodies of the male and female and draw them into a new understanding with emotion and power that can flaunt and exploit itself. They learn to recognize the possibility of self through physical power.

PART II: THE TIES THAT BIND

I personally have never been interested in the motherhood role as an excuse for something or as a way to gain power over my husband. I know it is used as a form of control for women and as a way to give them place and value. I had children because I wanted children, and with each I projected my ability to support them myself, if necessary. The image of power is always there between men and women. In the Mormon theology there seems to be a stepladder relationship: God, man, woman, child. A ladder neither my husband nor I have ever climbed.

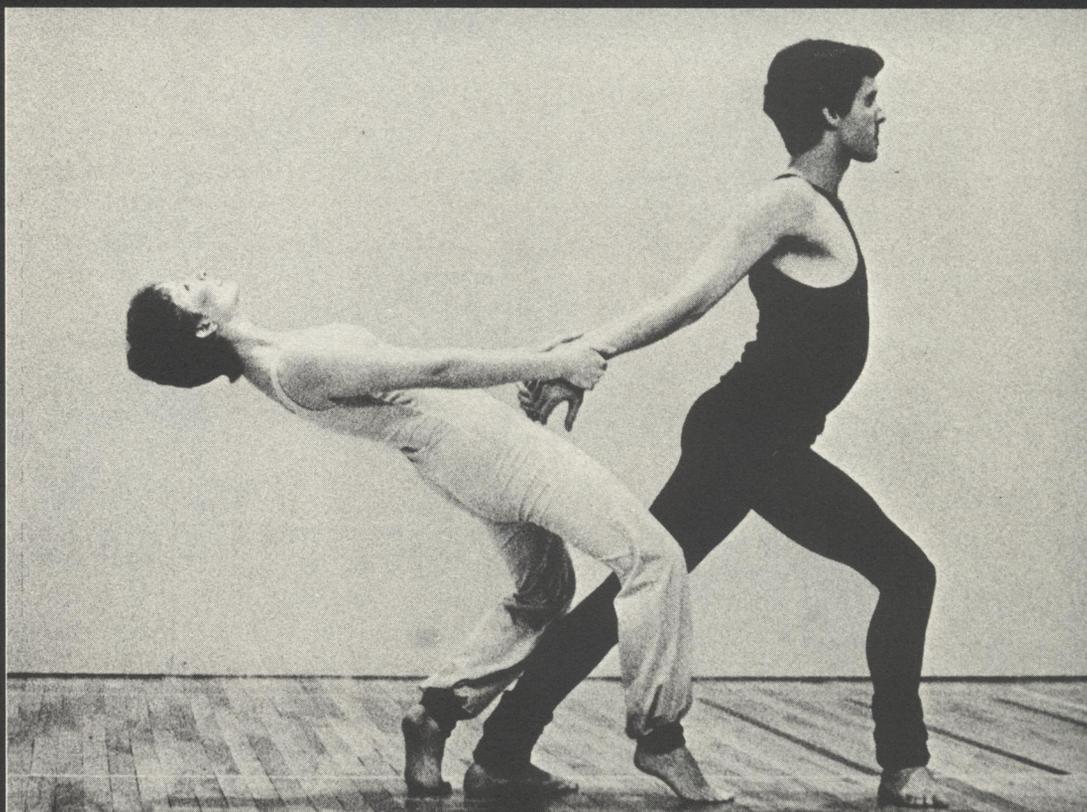
"Ties that Bind" is a high-risk duet that begins with an umbilical image of power through birthing. A long rope is tied around my waist that I fling to my partner. He takes the rope and drags me, resisting, around the room. Eventually he takes the rope and I discard it. He also discards the rope, and our relationship moves to a physically manipulative duet where I hammerlock his arm; he throws me, I roll him. The dance finally resolves itself with the two of us lying down feet-to-feet as in a cemetery—a resignation, a burial, a realization that force will not work as the base for a relationship.

PART III: DEITIES AND OTHER SECRETS KEPT

Humor has been a large part of my survival system. As with many Mormons, ideas coupled with laughter seem less threatening. In this section, a multicolored taffeta parachute was hung over the shoulders of a man riding on the shoulders of another man. Three women dancers under the parachute ballooned it out to make an awesome promenade of power. Many cultures parade their deity images. A carnival attitude then goes with it. So I had this glorious, rosy-cheeked man ride around on the others. The ones giving him volume and the appearance of power were, in this case, women. Gradually each one drops out of supporting the figure—dropping out from the bottom



"Commencement" —Frances Babb, Dale Crittenberger, Jeffrey Strum, Heather Tuck



"Journey in Innocence" —Frances Babb and Kim Curtis

"Ties That Bind" — Jeffrey Strum and Maida Withers



of the parachute in clumps wearing shrouds and veils. The deflated god became a head looking up from a river of fabric.

When I was choreographing "Woman See," Khomeini took over in Iran. There was the threat that Muslim women would have to be veiled and have to retreat to those closeted places where women stay with the children. Shrouded women in my piece became a comment on what happens to a system if women stop supporting it, if women recognize that they have power to deflate or to build up. I think of the Wizard of Oz—the idea that as long as we keep pumping it up, it will hold, but it cannot hold itself up. I am not saying that the idea of God is nonsensical as in a carnival. I am saying that there is much myth and that the ideas of men and women get attached to the myth.

Placing a mask over the male's head, we created a new image of a female god, propped her back up and promenaded with her. Eventually the whole thing collapsed.

PART IV: HE AND WE/SACRED SISTERHOOD

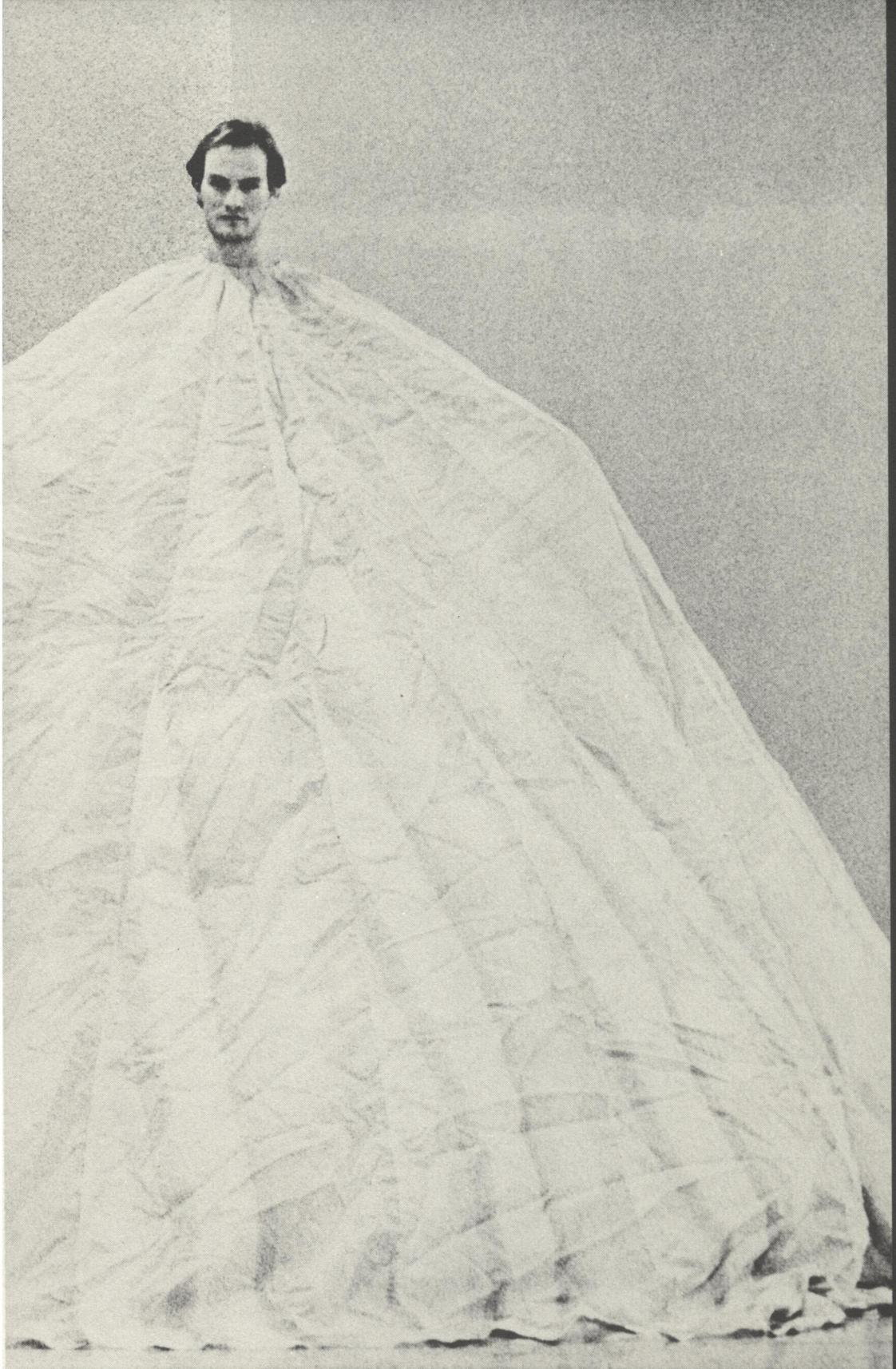
This scene is a combination of polygamy and other biblical images. Narrative is read by a very tall woman wearing cowgirl boots. She has the choice of ordering two pages of statements, reading where she feels it is appropriate. She quotes Ellis Shipp's diary and other writings: "Everyone here knows I'm a Mormon but I don't talk about my involvement in polygamy. No one understands . . . I don't know if I do." "You're a woman, you're to follow my counsel. I forbid you to go." "Abraham received concubines, and they bore him children, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness because they were given unto him and he abode in my law." "His wives were selected with attention to heredity, education and absence of defects." "Give my love to Kate and Margaret and kiss all the babies for me."

The dance was scored for a man to cross the stage on a diagonal, moving assertively with one woman following. Before the second crossing, a woman enters and steps in front of the woman, yet behind the man, and they repeat the crossing as a trio. The ritual is repeated when a third woman steps in front of the two women and the crossing becomes a quartet.

In the premiere performance when the narrator said, "Everyone here knows I'm a Mormon," I felt a real shock. The word "Mormon" had finally been said aloud in one of my performances. I suddenly became aware of my closeted culture, its secrecy and my instinctive protectionism. I felt the shock of the public quality of that even though it is generally known I am a Mormon. I thought as I was dancing, "They all think that this concert is about me."

Actually, "Woman See" is not autobiographical. Although I grew up in a Mormon family, my background is not polygamous. But the idea of "sacred sisterhood" is still contemporary among Mormons; many still regard it as an eternal principle.





"Deities and Other Secrets Kept" —Dale Crittenberger

PART V: WOMAN WAITING

This solo was introduced by a film of breadmaking projected on the balloon. A woman of the 1940s is wearing an apron and kneading the bread. Women have long used breadmaking to work out their feelings of aggression and creativity. Well, I like domestic work myself. I like the mundane work that puts me in touch with the concrete realities of life. I like the physicality of it, but I refuse to be consumed by it.

For this work, I looked at some photographic images of Mennonite women (late 1800s). In the early stages, I referred to this solo as “View from the Front Porch” because of these pictures of women sitting on the porch and leaning on buildings and talking to each other in hushed voices. As a child, I used to sit on our front porch and shell fresh peas for bottling—the porch was the workplace. Heather Tuck, mother of three-year-old Emily and a wonderful breadmaker, was cast as the soloist. She dances it magnificently.

As a mother, one of the hardest things (although it was also an idyllic part of my life—the innocence and beauty and the interplay with children, the innocence that was like the spontaneity of dancing) was the *waiting*. Waiting until they grew out of diapers, waiting for them to climb the stairs. You have a choice. You can carry them up the stairs, saying, “You better learn to climb up the stairs because tomorrow I’m going to be bored with carrying you,” or you can wait until they do it themselves. It is an eternity of waiting.

“Women Waiting” also has to do with waiting for the vote, for the priesthood, for the right moment. There is a rhythm to it: a filling up of the lungs, a gathering in followed by an explosive, controlled release. One of the realizations I had about the women’s movement while I was choreographing this is that women are no longer willing to wait. They are moving.

PART VI: PITFALLS AND PEDESTALS

An aqua-metal refrigerator door out of the fifties when everything seemed to be painted aqua serves as a pedestal for this male-female duet. In the fifties it was possible for women to have more leisure and for men to do more for women and families than before in Mormon culture. There was more money too.

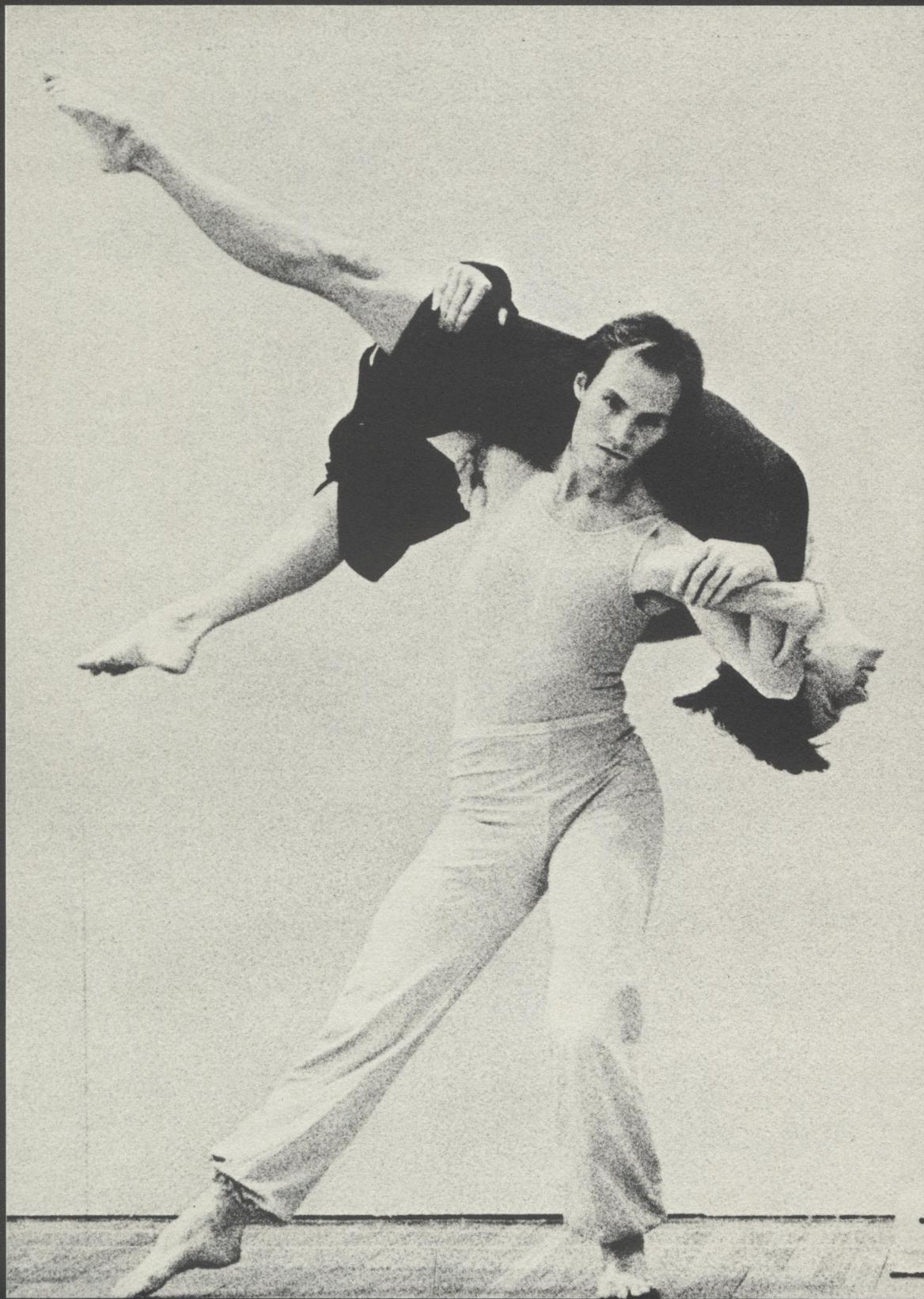
The piece is scored so that Dale puts Heather on the pedestal, and she stays on it until he takes her off. Originally the dance was improvised through one rule. She couldn’t get on until he put her on; she had to stay on until he took her off. He was tender and loving. She was amused, perplexed and limited to her 12” by 12” kitchen space.

As narrative, I decided to use an information sheet provided by the Archives in Washington, D.C. that describes the extreme measures they take there to preserve the actual U.S. Constitution, methods used to protect “our fundamental charters from harm of every kind.” This was my way of introducing the Equal Rights Amendment. Everyone is for equality but not if it must be included in the Constitution.

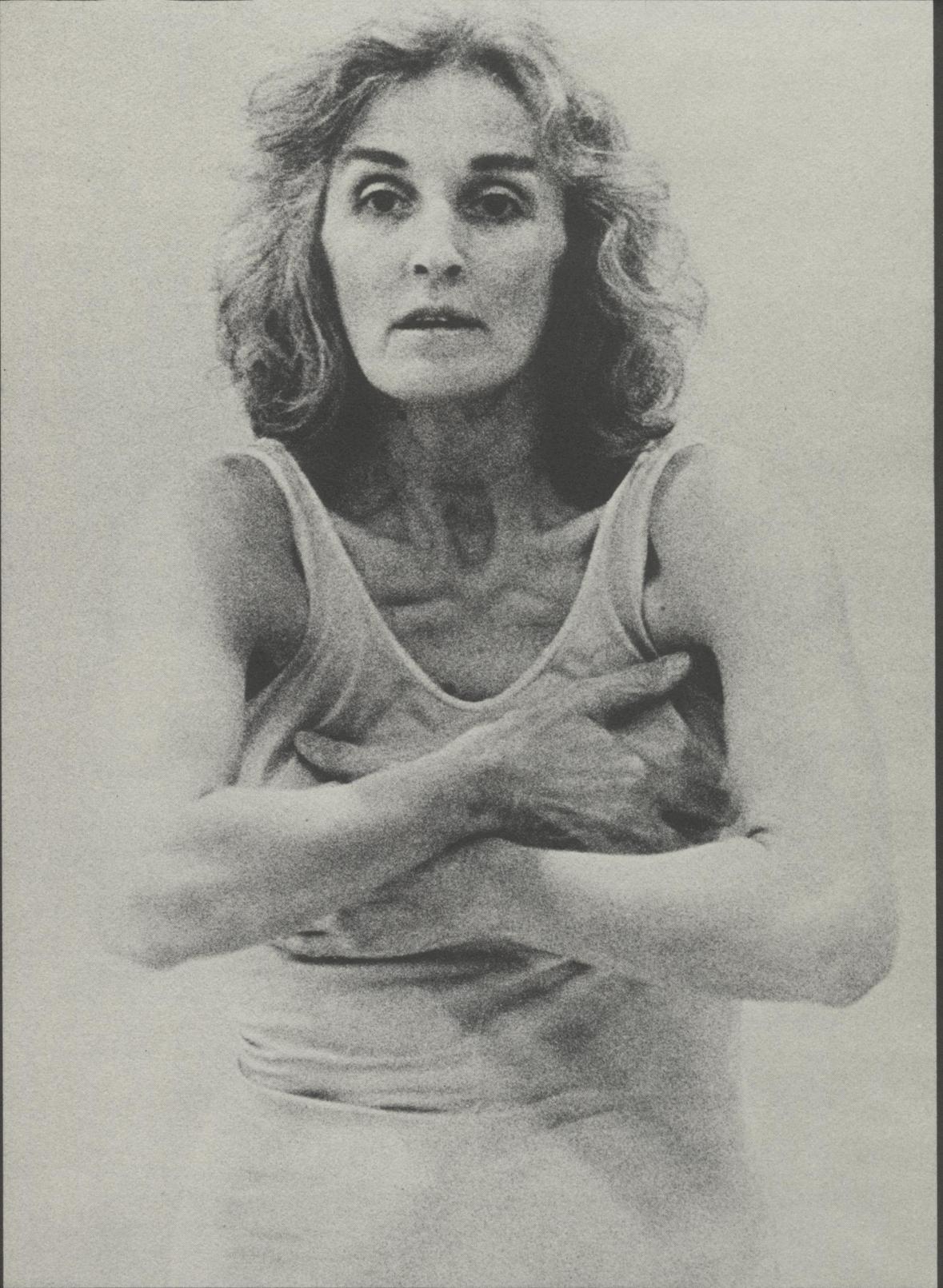
"Woman Waiting" — Heather Tuck



"Pitfalls and Pedestals" —Dale Crittenberger and Heather Tuck



"The Great Holdup" — Maida Withers



The dance is very humorous on the surface and the narrative so ludicrous that it brings laughter. It is read by a tall cowgirl in white pants, shirt and boots. Of course she does not fit because the cowboys and Indians of American symbolism have always been male. Although "Pitfalls and Pedestals" is funny, it is one of those layered comments. If you are unaware of the equal rights debate, you see a beautiful duet of loving confinement, and you miss the big picture. Many people missed it!

PART VII: THE GREAT HOLDUP

The next section projects a film close-up of my mouth on the weather balloon, showing me sucking my cheeks, twisting my tongue and other exaggerated and vulgar gestures. This film led to my solo, a broad and blatant statement in which I slap the floor with my foot, put my hands to my breasts and violate other aesthetic conventions of dance. I refer to it as "The Great Holdup" because sex is one of the major things to hold men and women up. I took some of the more crude gestures people have used, like thumbing the nose and slapping the buttocks to show how men and women tend to view sex in our culture. I used the hand gestures of snubbing the nose and shooting a gun. There is a sense of violence, a breaking out of conventional images. Perhaps it also gives a sense of the revolutionary, of women who defy convention. I danced it in tennis shoes and played it in a way that acknowledges the sexuality of the body.

PART VIII: RECOMMENCEMENT

The finale includes material from every section of the work. Both men and women share and exchange movement and roles. Threads of material reoccur throughout with new value placed on movement as it is juxtaposed in new ways. At the end the man and the woman walk together, encircling the space. They watch the image of woman projected on the balloon: She is strong. She is sensual. She is free. She is eternal.



"Recommencement" —Maida Withers and Jeffrey Strum

FICTION

THE LAST DAY OF SPRING

LINDA SILLITOE

LAURIE HAD WANTED for a long time to visit Jen. When Mama took David, the baby, to visit their favorite aunt she and Carol complained.

"I know you want to see her," Mama explained, "but she's changed. I don't want you to see her like this. I don't think she does. David's so young he doesn't notice."

Mama was taking them today for the wrong reason. "I know it will be hard for you," she said when she asked them to get ready. Her voice was as raw and scratchy as stretched rope. "But it will be easier for you to let her go if you just see her."

"Why aren't you ready?" Mama said now. "Aunt Margaret will be here pretty soon."

She sat down suddenly beside Laurie on the side of the bed. Laurie reached for her shoe.

"I know you think I don't understand. You know, Laurie—" she cleared her throat—"Margaret and Jim accepted this long before I did. So did Daddy. But I just couldn't—"

Laurie bent down to ease her heel into her shoe. Now Mama had made her throat hurt again, and she resented it, so she let Mama talk to the back of her neck and her curved shoulders.

"Maybe we're wrong, Laurie."

Laurie put on her other shoe and stood up. "But maybe we're not." She turned on one heel and talked over her shoulder the way Carol did sometimes. Carol would be a high school freshman in the fall. "I'm ready. And I want to visit her."

LINDA SILLITOE has published poems, investigative articles, reviews, and short stories. She is presently a reporter for the Deseret News.

Laurie stopped for a moment at the mirror. She could feel Mama's eyes and moved so that her own image blocked her mother's reflection. Her hair was all right, smooth and shiny though not as dark and glossy as Carol's. Her pink dress looked fine with its V-neckline. Even her skinny legs looked better in nylon and low heels. She carefully applied the light lipstick Mama let her wear, blotted it, and rubbed the tissue on her cheekbones. Carelessly, she dropped the tissue into the small wastebasket by the closet and left the room.

Laurie had no intention of letting go. She knew that Jen would get well. She walked briskly out to the living room, clicking her heels, to watch out the picture window. Laurie heard stories about miracles and healings almost every Sunday. Every time as she sat listening hard, her knees clamped together but still trembling, she could see that Jen too, Jen for sure, would get well. David got better, and they had really been anxious about him.

The day David visited Jen, Daddy had picked up Laurie at the junior high to drive her to her clarinet lessons. He told her how David perched on Jen's bed and sang "You Are My Sunshine." He'd learned it from one of Mama's old records.

"David's were the only dry eyes in the room by the time he sang, 'Please don't take my sunshine away,'" Daddy said. "I don't know if you realize it, Laurie, but we almost lost David when he had pneumonia last winter."

Laurie nodded. She could feel that odd trembling in her knees.

"Jen wanted the drapes pulled back, and since it was about two-thirty, the sun just blazed through the windows. They look west. David was right in the brightest square of sun on the bed."

Laurie could visualize him there, his blue eyes flashing with delight at being the center of a circle of adults.

"Then Jen said, 'I wish I could see him better.' She was laughing and wiping her eyes and didn't see the look your mother gave me. That's how we know she is going blind."

Laurie jumped when Aunt Margaret rang the doorbell. Laurie could tell by the way she greeted Mama and lifted her eyebrows at Carol and Laurie that Aunt Margaret thought it was a mistake to take them but wasn't going to say anything. Her own children hadn't visited Jen.

Laurie watched Mama and Aunt Margaret walk out to the car. They looked young and pretty with their white bags and shoes, the spring sunshine on their hair. She and Carol wore their Easter dresses with last year's summer shoes which pinched a little. It was warm this morning. No one needed a sweater.

On the way to the hospital Carol chatted with Aunt Margaret about Sylvia, the cousin Carol's age. No one said anything about Jen. Laurie felt that she could run faster than the car was moving, race it to the hospital and get there first. There were a hundred things she had to tell Jen. She wanted to interrupt Mama and say, "Even if Jen can't see well now, will she want to talk to us? Will she want to know what we've been doing? Can I say. . .?" But it sounded stupid even in her own head so she kept still. She didn't know how the three of them could act as if they were going shopping or out to lunch.

Any other year they'd already be looking forward to the Fourth of July party at Jen's. Sometimes several parties came first as if no one could wait. On the Fourth there would be a barbecue on the patio. Everyone would sit in lawn chairs and on blankets eating from paper plates. The little cousins would race and tumble over each other, kicking cups of lemonade and squashing their toes into abandoned ice cream cones.

After dinner the oldest girls always huddled in one of the cars, playing the radio, talking, and shrieking with laughter. Carol and Sylvia watched enviously, pretending not to notice. Maybe this year they would be old enough to get into the car.

Jen's husband, Al, usually found a shady corner and stretched out on the grass, his hat over his eyes. All the clamor and talk drifted over him like a cloud of gnats. The two oldest boys played catch on the far edge of the long side yard, endlessly throwing a softball back and forth, warning the younger boys to stay out of range.

Then when it was dark, too dark even to play no bears are out tonight, Al would light the fireworks—flares, fountains, Roman candles and rockets. And how could the neighbors complain when in sight from their windows stood Daddy, often in uniform straight from shift. Even if he worked a plain clothes shift, his gun and handcuffs were in the locked glove compartment, his badge in his wallet.

They all sat in groups on the lawn, peaceful and privileged, watching the gleaming showers of sparks float shimmering and singly down through the warm, cricket-noisy air to melt in the black grass.

Laurie sighed and rolled down the window a little, not quite enough to blow Carol's hair. She listened to Aunt Margaret for a moment to see if they were saying anything about Jen, but they were talking about Aunt Margaret's next door neighbors. Their daughter was getting married, and Aunt Margaret's youngest daughter was going to be the flower girl. Aunt Margaret had been sewing her dress.

Laurie had often seen a wedding dress glistening like a ghost in the hall between the bedrooms in Jen's house. Jen often made them for the daughters of close friends or relatives.

"I want you to make my girls' wedding dresses someday," Laurie heard Mama say once as she stood admiring the white creation in the hall.

Jen smiled and shook her head. "You'll want to make them yourself."

Laurie rolled down her window another inch. Mama and Aunt Margaret were still talking about the wedding, and Carol was listening closely. She wondered if Al would be visiting Jen at the same time they did. Laurie felt a hollow in her stomach. Suddenly she missed Al almost as much as she had been missing Jen. She didn't dare ask about Al, though.

Al had a shop in the basement of his house. He drove a big black van, and all the children loved to clamber over his plumbing tools and peek out through the small rear window. Children were seldom allowed in Al's shop downstairs, but once when Laurie went down she saw a bed there. She wondered about that, if Al actually became so weary working in the shop that he couldn't climb up the stairs to the white double in Jen's bedroom.

Once on Thanksgiving the entire family tugged their chairs around Jen's train of white-clothed tables placed end to end through the living room and dining room. As they looked toward Al at the end of the row, he slowly sank from sight. He landed, they found by leaning from their own chairs, on his side still in his chair on the floor. After the concerned exclamations and a little suppressed laughter, Al picked himself up and a Thanksgiving blessing was said.

As the dishes began traveling up and down the sides of the tables, the teasing and laughter rose again. Then Jen said dryly to Al, "I asked you to fix that chair months ago."

Everyone laughed uproariously, but when Laurie looked at Jen she saw that she was not laughing, and Laurie's own grin felt stiff. Jen was watching Al, who went on heaping his plate with food.

It was bad enough to have the summer ruined, Laurie thought bitterly as they turned on State Street, but what if Jen weren't well in time for Christmas? Most Christmases Al made something wonderful for at least one age group of cousins. She and Carol had in their bedroom duplicate doll bunkbeds and wooden cupboards with glass windows.

From Halloween on, visits to Jen and Al's house were almost torturous as adults were spirited away to the basement and returned with bright, secretive eyes. No child was allowed past the pantry above the basement stairs.

One year everyone received wooden turtles with wheels on the underside, and they raced down the frozen sidewalks yelling and falling off. Last Christmas had been quieter, but the year before there were huge toy chests for the boys. Daddy and Uncle Jim carried in the first one. As they set it in the center of the living room floor, one of the twins leaped out with a rebel whoop. The shrieks of the girls, the crying of little Judy, and the loud, free laughter from the grownups still echoed in Laurie's head as Aunt Margaret said, "Well, here we are," and Mama set the brake on the car.

The inside of the county hospital seemed dim. The green walls shone faintly, but the floors were dull. Jen had been moved here a week ago because the months of hospital treatment had depleted her insurance and bank accounts. Mama had explained that to them last Saturday, adding that she and Aunt Margaret couldn't fill all the hours of constant care Jen needed now with friends and relatives. They hired a private nurse.

After she told about the nurse Mama paused and added, "If Al comes by sometime and neither Daddy nor I are home, I don't want you to let him in."

Carol and Laurie exchanged startled looks. Carol pressed for more information. Laurie was outraged. Mama wouldn't say much but made them promise just the same.

"Al is a little different than we thought. Maybe because he's upset and worried."

Carol and Laurie could see her sorting through her thoughts like playing cards, sifting most back into the pile, turning a few face down on the table and turning up several for them to see.

"Jen finally asked us not to schedule Al to stay with her, because he would just leave, and then she didn't have anyone there." She hesitated again.

"He changed the locks," she said at last and her voice trembled a little. "We used to go by once in a while and pick up things Jen wanted. He changed the locks. And there have been other things. We just want you to be careful even if you don't understand."

Now Mama and Aunt Margaret paused before a door and spoke briefly to a nurse who was leaving the room. Laurie stopped just inside the door, realizing in time that she had missed hearing that they were going to visit someone else first. She waited politely for them to finish with this friend of Aunt Margaret's or great-aunt-whomever. She hoped they would hurry.

Then Laurie noticed that everyone except the woman in the bed was staring at her oddly. Carol seemed embarrassed as if Laurie were a child about to throw a public tantrum. Annoyed, Laurie smiled and stepped forward, waiting to be introduced. Then she realized with a jolt like the night she stuck her finger into an empty light socket in the dark that she knew this old, thin woman.

"Hi, Jen," she said and moved toward the bed, ready to gulp the words back if she was wrong.

The woman didn't answer but now, standing beside her, Laurie could see that she had Jen's cheekbones and chin, her long straight arm and broad hand. The skin stretched over her bones like old tissue paper, grayed with delicate dust. Her hair was also gray and drawn back from her face. There was a transparent tube in one nostril. Her stillness was the stillness of stone.

"Mmm, pretty flowers," said Aunt Margaret cheerfully. She looked at the card. "Adria sent them, I see. Pretty red tulips, aren't they Ruth?"

"Lovely," Mama answered. "You look better today, Jen. It's warm and beautiful outside."

Carol and Laurie looked at each other desperately across the bed. Neither could speak.

"Carol and Laurie wanted to come," Mama said, "so I brought them along. They're out of school now and bored already."

Carol managed a short laugh. Laurie tried to echo it but only squeaked. Horrified, she covered it with a cough and looked away.

There was a card on the inside of the door, mounted with tape. It said, "Dear friends and family, Please remember that as far as we know, Jen still hears well and govern your conversations accordingly." She looked back at Jen. Jen's hand was just inches from her own. She wanted to touch it, but she was too frightened. Jen's fingers were curled in as if she were holding something.

Once when Jim Jr. and Mike were throwing a softball back and forth Jen passed them on her way to the patio. She suddenly stepped in front of Jim Jr. and caught the ball with a quick upward swing of her arm. She fired it to Mike as everyone cheered and Jen bowed and bowed, shaking her stinging hand.

"Dorothy and Sam called from California," Mama said sweetly, smiling at Carol and Laurie. "They send their love. She said they think of you all the time and pray for you every night."

A croak came from the bed. Laurie jumped. It came again, a noise that might emerge from someone deaf from birth who had never heard the texture of a human voice nor been trained to imitate it. Mama and Aunt Margaret bent over Jen, no longer casual.

"Margaret?" Aunt Margaret said. "Do you want me to stay with you this afternoon?"

The noise came again. Jen's lips barely parted, there was no motion in her face or throat, yet Laurie could see the cords in her neck sharpen into ridges. She wanted to run.

"That's not it," Mama said.

"Miriam!" Margaret exclaimed. The sound stopped. "You want Miriam to come? That's it, isn't it? I'll call her this afternoon. I'm sure she'll come."

Jen was silent for the rest of the visit. Laurie was silent, too, staring at Jen then looking away. The only other person she had seen so motionless was her grandfather in his coffin. Yet although Jen looked far less lifelike than he had, Laurie was reminded by Jen of a jungle cat in the zoo, its eyes open only a silent slit, its powerful limbs indifferent. She hates having us see her like this, Laurie thought.

Laurie remembered that once last summer Jen had stayed in bed during one party and lay on the chaise lounge most of the others. Once when she started to go after something, Aunt Margaret said, "Lie down. You're supposed to be resting."

Laurie looked up surprised because with a baby on Jen's lap, David perched at the end of the lounge, and a dozen chairs crowded around it with everyone talking full speed, she hadn't realized that Jen was doing more than visiting. Jen caught her scared look and winked.

Suddenly Laurie remembered the most amazing thing in Jen's house of wonders—her clock. She had brought it home with her from a trip back East. It was electric with a gold rim and hands, but there was only air where the face should be. There were not even notches along the rim to mark numerals. Laurie had thought the clock very odd and fascinating, but now in this brief, endless visit she thought that all clocks should be like Jen's. She thought the clock should be here in this room with Jen and nearly mentioned it. But Mama and Aunt Margaret were kissing Jen and leaving the room with Carol.

"Good-bye, Jen," Carol said.

Laurie walked to the end of the bed. She looked hard at Jen. Even at Christmas Jen had seemed well enough, sitting on the floor with the kids singing Christmas carols, the parents behind them on the sofa and overstuffed chairs. Six weeks later Jen had checked into the hospital.

Laurie had glanced back quickly at Jen in the middle of a carol and caught her with tears in her eyes. Jen had grinned, and Laurie pretended not to notice the tears. She remembered them now though as she left Jen's room. She didn't say good-bye.

When they walked out of the hospital doors the street seemed altered. Laurie remembered the ride home from the hospital after her appendectomy when she was ten. During those lost two weeks the leaves had turned and

fallen. Now the city shimmered with the heat and hues of summer. A child with only basic colors in her crayon box had colored the grass strong deliberate green, the sky a relentless blue, and the sunlight so yellow she could almost see the crooked black smile crayoned on the sun's round face. The vivid red, orange and violet flowers in the hospital garden burned her eyes.

Aunt Margaret wanted Mama to drop her off downtown to have her glasses adjusted. They talked of ordinary things, but the back of Mama's neck looked strained. Carol seemed uncertain, dabbing at her eyes. Laurie was amazed that Mama had taken them. She thought she could see something of what it had cost her in the set of her shoulders as she drove and the deliberate way she avoided their eyes in the rear view mirror.

"I'm positive she was asking for Miriam," Aunt Margaret said.

After a minute Mama said, "You're probably right."

"Miriam tells her she's going to get well. She wants her to come and tell her that again."

Laurie listened intently but Mama seemed to be concentrating on the traffic. Laurie stared out the side window. It was easier now. The colors in the heart of the town were dusty, softer.

"Hey, there's Al," she said sitting up straight. "Look—there! He's going into that restaurant with that lady."

They all looked, Mama's foot braking instinctively. A man with brown, thinning hair and long arms like Al's was holding the elbow of a red-haired woman. They disappeared behind the tinted glass door of a restaurant.

Carol and Laurie looked at each other and read mutual question marks. They listened expectantly. Mama changed lanes to turn the corner.

"It could be anyone," Aunt Margaret said. "Al is a very average man."

Carol was leaning forward the way she did when she found out about square roots or spontaneous combustion. Then her face shut, and she sat back sedately.

Laurie slumped down in the backseat and began chewing on her thumbnail. She could see the whole afternoon stretched out before her like a blank inch on a road map. It was her turn to fix dinner and set the table. Carol's turn for family prayer. Laurie suddenly knew that Carol would pray for Jen's suffering to end and that she, Laurie, would refuse to say amen.

That night Laurie lay motionless in bed waiting for Carol to go to sleep. She startled as Carol slid with a thump from the bunk above her, swept her robe around her, sobbing, and burst out of the bedroom, slamming the door. In a minute or two Laurie heard Mama's voice mingled with Carol's, the two of them talking brokenly. She could even see them through the closed white door, arms around one another. The lift of relief and acceptance in the voices tightened her throat. Her cheekbones ached. They had ached forever.

For a second it was almost too much for her. In the arches of her feet she could feel herself spring from the bed and run from the bedroom in her bare feet and summer nightgown into the peace of the eye that was opening in the storm. Then the jumbled voices clarified for a moment, and she thought she heard Mama say, "We have to let her go."

Laurie gripped the covers tightly and held on, glaring up at the springs of the top bunk and thinking of bitter, biting things to say to Carol when she returned to bed.

Laurie didn't know she was asleep until she woke up sitting erect with tears dripping from her jaw. The house was dark and silent. The bunk above her sagged in the center. She sat there a moment, gasping and trembling, before the dream returned.

She was wearing the swishy yellow dotted-swiss dress Mama made the summer she was nine. It was after church—Sunday evening. They were running through the twilight across Jen's green hill of a front lawn, snatching up pods fallen from the maples and prying them open to press the sticky sides of the Y's against their noses. Then they ran past Al, stepping nimbly, lightly, over his hands outstretched above his head as he lay on the grass. He grabbed at their ankles, and they shrieked and ran on laughing, laughing.

The ache in her cheekbones eased as more tears washed over them, and kneeling flat on her legs she bent from the waist over her arms pressed hard against her stomach and cried into the nightgown bunched over her knees. She cried for the singularity of the childhood she had lost, and for all the things she thought she had understood and was now quite sure she would never understand.

SEARCHING

MARGARET R. MUNK

BETH KNEW as soon as Wendy answered the phone that it was a boy on the other end. Wendy's eager young "hello" was followed by silence and then a furtive, whispered, "Just a minute." Wendy hung up the receiver softly and almost imperceptibly slipped out of the kitchen, headed, Beth knew, for the upstairs bedroom with the extension phone.

They had always agreed that there would be no dates until Wendy was sixteen; but it had been almost a year since that mystical threshold to womanhood had been crossed, and Beth had suffered Wendy's disappointment when the expected young swains had not appeared at the door, family car keys in hand, as scheduled. It had been only in the past two or three months, as spring had signaled the approaching end of the school year, that occasional telephone calls had begun to cause Wendy to disappear upstairs, and Beth had learned to recognize the manly quaver in the voice of someone who identified himself as Arthur.

"Arthur who, honey?" Beth had asked cautiously. "Do I know him?"

"Arthur Morris," Wendy had mumbled to the arm of her chair. "No, I don't think so. He's just a boy at school."

A boy at school. There must be a thousand boys in that big school, thought Beth, and I probably know ten of them, the boys at church and Hal up the street.

"Do you know who his parents are?"

Beth winced as she remembered how foolishly irrelevant that very question had sounded coming from her father each time she or one of her sisters had mentioned a new friend. She was mortified to see in Wendy's glance precisely her own reaction of thirty years before. But the question hung insistently in the air between them, needing an answer, needing to define a root, a context for a meaningless name plucked from the unfamiliar sea of names and faces which swallowed Wendy every day as the yellow bus rolled off toward the high school five miles away.

"Mr. and Mrs. Morris, I guess. His dad works at a clothing store somewhere. They live over near Ledgewood Mall, the other side of the school."

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Beth had been grateful for this small offering from her daughter's store of private information and had not been deaf to the embarrassed tension in Wendy's voice; but still her need to know and to protect Wendy from something undefined would not let her rest.

"Do you—see Arthur often at school?"

"Mom—he's just a friend." This time Beth had respected the pleading in Wendy's eyes—pleading for trust and for the right to tread alone upon ground still too shaky under her feet to be shared companionably. Beth had left the room with a light stroke to Wendy's straight brown hair.

Arthur had continued to call, though he had never yet appeared at the Bronson home, and Beth felt sure it was he who was talking with Wendy now. What in the world do they talk about? Curiosity nagged at her each time Wendy secluded herself for one of these extended conversations, but Beth knew that the price of lifting the receiver in the kitchen would be too great, and she resisted the impulse firmly.

Rick came home from work and riffled through the evening paper, and Randy appeared in the kitchen with a lean and slightly desperate expression that told Beth his twelve-year-old balance had tipped from the need to pitch baseballs in favor of the need for food. Dinner was ready, and still Wendy did not appear. Half an hour is too long, Beth thought authoritatively. Pointing Randy in the direction of the bathroom sink, she mounted the stairs determinedly and tapped at the closed bedroom door.

"Wendy."

There was no sound from within, either in response or in conversation. After a pause of a few seconds, Beth turned the knob quietly and opened the door an apologetic crack. The room was dark. The level of Beth's annoyance rose by a degree. Had Wendy slipped out, then, without saying where she was going?

"Wendy?"

Beth turned to leave when a small sound reached out from the darkness and held her still, both heart and feet. She was blind in the dark room, but her feet knew the way to the bedside without need for sight or thought.

"Wendy! What is it, honey? Whatever is it?"

Beth's voice seemed to uncork the grief contained there in the darkness, and waves of sobbing poured uncontrolled for several minutes over the pillow while Beth sat helplessly stroking the wet forehead and waiting for them to subside. She spoke softly from the quagmire of pain into which memory was tugging her along with Wendy.

"Oh, Wendy. Oh, love."

One hand found another somewhere among the little hills and hollows of the quilted bed cover.

"Oh, Mom."

"Were you talking to Arthur?"

A deep gulp answered from the pillow.

"What did he say to you?" Tell me what he said so I can strangle him, strangle him not only for your pain but for whatever gave him, an interloper into your life, power to cause you pain.

"I can't tell you."

"Why can't you? Sure you can."

Wendy breathed deeply as if storing air for a plunge into deep water.

"There's going to be—this dance, you know. At school."

Wendy's words came in little, tortured measures, separated by gasps for air as if something in her were struggling for survival.

"Oh. Yes." Oh, Wendy, don't remind me. All those dances. All those evenings at Mutual, all those afternoons in the junior high gym, all the corners I stood in watching athletes with acne twirling girls in felt skirts and saddle oxfords between the basketball hoops while I ached to be out there doing what I didn't have the skill or confidence to do had any of them given me the chance. All those Saturday nights at home in my room after glimpses of crepe paper streamers and flowery bandstands. Some things are never laughable, no matter how long it's been. A dance. I know.

Beth waited. Wendy had never been to a school dance. You had to have a date. No progress in twenty years. Wendy's voice suddenly leveled out and flowed with a grim smoothness through the shadows.

"I was going to go with Arthur to the dance."

"You—were?"

"He asked me last Saturday." Wendy's voice trailed off into a little squeak, and the tears began again. "But—"

"But—?"

"I'm not going now."

"Not going? Why not, honey? Why didn't you tell me, Wendy? What fun to be going to a dance, why—" Why were you ashamed to tell me, Wendy? Why am I asking? I know so well. If he would ask me, he's not worth bragging about. Oh, I know. "But now—you're not going? Why not?"

"Mom, I just can't tell you."

"Sure you can. Honey, I understand. I've been there so often. Maybe it was long ago, but—"

"Mom." The sudden address was to her, but Beth knew Wendy was not looking at her. The grim, careful tones had returned and were aimed at the wall on the opposite side of the bed.

"Yes?"

"He said his parents don't want him getting involved with me. They don't want him to even call me any more because—"

"They—what?" All the protective instinct Beth had harbored since her first view of Wendy through a hospital nursery window gathered itself into a tight ball, ready to spring and kill.

"—because I'm adopted."

The force inside of Beth sprang with a ferocity of which she had never suspected herself capable, only to find its object immaterial and elusive, and she was left clawing murderously at empty air. Wendy's words poured out now as if, having once inflicted the wound, it mattered little how deeply she drove the blade.

"They say how does he know who he's getting mixed up with? What does he know about me? You're always so interested to know who everybody's parents are! Well, Arthur's parents want to know that, too, and I don't even know! I don't even know myself! Oh, somebody tell me, oh please!"

Beth clutched at her as if to prevent her from drowning, feeling as she did so that they might both go down together. Wendy fought her efforts as Beth struggled to gather her against her breast, to comfort her as she had years ago, a band-aid offered as a remedy for arterial bleeding.

I'm very sorry, Mrs. Bronson. We ran the test several times, with several different donors. There were no living sperm left in the sample after an hour. It's an unusual condition, and one of the least subject to remedy. I would encourage you and your husband to go ahead with your adoption plans.

Wendy yielded to her at last, and Beth sat, blinder than before, cradling Wendy's head where there had once been room for her entire small body.

Oh, Rick, look at her. Look at her. If I could hold her this way forever—

At last Beth felt herself capable of speaking.

"Honey—it's been a long time, hasn't it, since we talked about it? I guess I'd fooled myself into thinking it didn't bother you anymore. Oh, if I could have prevented this—anything, anything—except not having you."

She rocked Wendy like the child of eight she had been on another night when Beth had found her crying in her bed and heard her confession that the tears were for her "real mother," that shadowy presence to whom Beth felt she owed everything and of whom she knew almost nothing.

I knew she would wonder, Beth had thought. Of course she would wonder. But is childhood over so soon? They had talked long past bedtime, and Beth had gone to sleep satisfied that Wendy felt unburdened and that she herself had handled the situation with fortitude. She had maintained her composure and, she believed, concealed from Wendy her own pain while offering reassurance and love, if little information.

What does it mean, *real*? She had put to Wendy at eight the question she had once had to resolve for herself while rocking Wendy back to sleep after a pre-dawn feeding.

She must know the facts of biology and law. It would be wrong, an outrage, to try to keep them from her. But we must find the right words, other words. 'Real' is for us, for Rick and me. The pains that brought her into the world were real enough, I don't doubt; but from now on, we are reality, the three of us.

Wendy had probed the subject several times after that, but now it had been a long time, and the woman whose body had been the vehicle for Wendy's birth seemed to have become the remote outsider Beth unconsciously wanted her to be.

The storm had calmed now, leaving only a terrible ache where it had torn away the complacency Beth had been cultivating so long. When Wendy spoke again out of the shadows, it was not with the questioning voice of a child but the determination of a woman who has made up her mind.

"Mom."

"Yes?"

"I have to find out. I'm going to. Do you remember, you told me once that if I really wanted to when I was old enough, you'd help me? I want to know now."

But why did she leave me in the hospital? Didn't she want me?

She wanted you, I'm sure, but she knew she couldn't take good care of you all by herself, so she trusted us to take care of you instead. We took you home right after you were born, and it was the most wonderful day we had ever had.

Did you know her?

No, we didn't know her, but we were very grateful to her.

Well, how did you know about me if you didn't know her?

There was a doctor—

It was easy enough to say it then, Wendy, thought Beth; easy enough when it seemed you would never be old enough.

"Mom, remember, you said there was a doctor who delivered me and who knew my real mother?"

Beth had to resist the impulse to pull away physically as she cringed inwardly, shocked at Wendy's unhesitating use of the dreaded words and at the realization that Wendy's memory of that long ago conversation was as clear as her own. Wendy persisted relentlessly.

"Will you tell me his name now? He lives in Robertstown, doesn't he, where I was born? I want to know his name and where he is. I want to talk to him."

"Wendy, I don't know—He was getting quite old even then. We haven't had any contact with him all this time. Grandma's friend worked with him, but she hasn't for years. I don't think he even knew your—your first mother very well. I really don't think—"

"Mom—if you won't, I will."

Beth's whole body had trembled when the phone call had come.

Mrs. Bronson? Good news. We have a beautiful baby girl for you. Are you superstitious? She was born yesterday, Friday the thirteenth.

It trembled in the same way now as she spoke into the receiver a name she had not spoken for sixteen years.

"Can you hold, please? I'm looking."

I'm holding, Beth thought as the long distance minutes passed. That's what I've been doing all this time, holding off, thinking I'd never really have to do this. Randy doesn't seem to care, he's always been able to accept things as they are. Oh, Wendy, why—?

"Hello? I'm sorry, ma'm. Our records show that Dr. Dandridge passed away in 1972. He had no one else in practice with him. Could we refer you to another doctor?"

"No—no, thank you."

Wendy was devastated by the news.

"Well, who else would know, Mom? Surely someone else in the world must know?"

Why don't I know? Beth asked herself. Because at the time I didn't want to know—as though the less I knew, the more she would be mine.

"The county court—But the records are sealed, honey. We couldn't see them without a special order from a judge. I don't know on what grounds—"

Wendy's eyes were full of dismay.

"It's my life! My life, my parents—do you really mean it's all down there

at the courthouse on a piece of paper, and they aren't going to let me see it? I can't believe that!"

Beth tried to catch her as she passed, but she was gone. Beth stood staring at the door Wendy had slammed behind her, then slowly sat down.

Rick, I had a dream that won't leave me alone —about the baby. I dreamed that I got onto a bus carrying her in my arms. While we were riding, she grew into a big girl, almost a woman. And when the bus stopped, she got off and walked away.

Beth sat for a long time, staring at the rack of the old upright piano. She had not been conscious of choosing this particular seat, but now she found herself leafing mindlessly through a hymn book, then stopping as her eye caught the name of a pioneer lyricist and poet.

She was a feisty lady, she thought through a dark haze. To have known her would have been an experience. I feel something for her, and not just because she wrote poetry in the desert. She never had children. Mothered all of Brigham's clan, did her best to see that his daughters became properly austere young ladies prepared to live The Principle uncomplainingly—but never had any of her own.

She began to pick out the melody with her right hand, until words buried in the third stanza stood out and moved her to repeat the phrase.

In the heavens, are parents single?
No, the thought makes reason stare.
Truth is reason; truth eternal
Tells me I've a mother there.

But Mama, why is it only Heavenly Father? Wouldn't there have to be a mother, too?

Beth raised her head, startled. The six-year-old voice speaking to her mind out of memory came from many years back, she knew, more years than Wendy had lived. It was her own. It was the same young voice which had whispered with sudden indignation to her best friend in the next seat what she could not bring herself to say aloud to Brother Freebairn, the seminary teacher.

Judy! This doesn't make sense —look: 'So God created man in His own image; male and female created He them.' Whoever wrote that hadn't had Mrs. Brock's physiology class!

There had been furtive jottings, too, in the margins of college notebooks.

Is God like the men who wrote the Book of Mormon? Our only evidence of women in their lives is that they had sons.

Beth smiled a little, but it was a smile crimped with a pain from which twenty years had only pared the raw edge. Her lips moved unconsciously in a prayer uttered one night that long ago as she had lain in bed with a familiar pain and heaviness in her lower abdomen, her body plugged with the wad of cotton that she prayed each month she would not need to wear for some time. How long had it been by then, she wondered, since she had begun to whisper that way at night?

Are you really there? Please —can you hear me? I need you. I need a baby so much. How can He really understand? It's you I need. Please —

And then the falling of the darkness, the sudden realization—

You can't understand either, can you? You're like all those women at church, sitting complacently with their six children beside them. Only you have millions of children. Even if you're there—you don't understand.

Since that night, Beth knew, something had been lacking in her prayers. But the pain had been salved, not by the enigma in the dark cosmos but by a very mortal little girl and boy.

Wendy! Beth looked at the clock and at the window beyond. She was alarmed to see that Wendy had been gone for over two hours and that the daylight was fading quickly. Numbly, Beth walked to the telephone and called Wendy's closest friends, one by one. None of them had seen her since school. Tensely and with some hesitation, she dialed the number of Wendy's Mutual teacher and then the bishop. Both sounded surprised and puzzled. Beth thanked them tersely and hung up, offering no explanation. Grateful that Randy had gone home from school with a friend to spend the night, Beth left a note for Rick, groped inside her purse for her car keys, and slid behind the steering wheel.

This is foolish, she thought, useless, even as she pulled into the almost empty parking lot across from the county courthouse. They must have been closed since five. Even if she really came here, she'd be gone.

But two lights still shone from the darkened building, and Beth found herself climbing the steps and pulling at the heavy front door. She jumped when it opened. An arrow painted on the pale wall in front of her pointed in the direction of one of the lighted windows. Underneath the arrow was stenciled, "County Clerk — Vital Statistics."

Beth found the lighted doorway, which framed the bent back of a woman poring over something on a desk in front of her.

"Excuse me—"

"Oh!" The woman whirled around like a marionette propelled by a sudden, sharp twist of the strings. "Oh, you took ten years off my life!"

"I'm sorry," Beth ventured meekly, "But I have to find out—Do you happen to know whether a young girl came in here late this afternoon—a sixteen-year-old girl with long, straight, brown hair? She—may have asked to see some old court records."

"Well, let's see." The woman's hand still rested on her chest as if to suppress her heartbeat. "Yes, there was a young girl came in here a while ago; asked to see Mr. Dixon. She wasn't in there very long. Left after a few minutes. She seemed upset about something, I remember."

"Do you know where—did she say anything—oh, I don't suppose she would." Beth leaned heavily against the door jamb.

"She didn't say anything to me, sorry. I've got to close up now. I'm two hours overtime already on these files." The woman rose stiffly and removed her glasses.

"Of course. Thank you. I'm very sorry to have disturbed you."

Beth walked slowly down the granite stairs to the sidewalk, where she turned to watch the last lights go out in the stodgy gray building. She wanted to drive home quickly and find Wendy waiting there, but fear that she would

not be there held her back. The growing darkness seemed to be within as well as around her, bringing with it an enticement somehow to sink deeper and deeper into its void until the terrible ache would be extinguished in nothingness.

As the yellow rectangles vanished into blackness, Beth's eye was caught by a softer light falling through the open door of the next building. It was a tiny chapel, much older than the houses of government and commerce which had grown up around it. Its facade was of dark brick, and above the narrow double doors hung a plain white cross. It had remained standing there like some inconspicuous monument to a more contemplative age, as if modernity had thought it not worth bothering about. Yet someone still tended the flame on the small altar inside and had parted the doors in a gesture of welcome.

I must pass that little church at least once a week, Beth thought, and yet I haven't really noticed it for years. She had been inside only once, but that occasion was a memorable one. It had been the year before Wendy was born, and Beth had been on her way home from work. At the bus stop, people had been talking excitedly, some of them crying openly. Peering over a shoulder at a newspaper headline four inches high, Beth had learned that the handsome young president was dead, shot through the head while riding in an open parade car. Stunned, she had wandered slowly through the town square, not anxious now to board the bus with that crush of chattering, weeping humanity. Passing the courthouse, she had come upon the open door of the little chapel, through which candlelight flickered in the November dusk. The small church was scarcely noticeable on other days, but that night it was full of people, many of them kneeling and weeping quietly. Beth was not accustomed to kneeling in church, but these were the dead president's people, and it seemed entirely fitting to slip into one of the wooden pews, sink to her knees against the padded railing in front of her, and softly give vent to her own shock and grief among the tiny flames and veiled women.

Tonight the carpet of gentle light extending from the doorway seemed to offer solace as it had before. Hardly conscious of her movement, but aware of the sensation of re-living a segment of the past, Beth walked toward the lighted doorway and stopped at the threshold. The softly lit interior, with its wooden benches, its lace-covered altar and its circle of stained glass, had not changed in the eighteen years since Beth had last entered; but she took no notice of these details. Her eyes immediately brought her only one message, and she caught her breath in wonder and relief. There were two other people in the chapel. One was an old woman who knelt at a small side altar, lighting a candle. The other was a young girl who sat near the front with her head bowed, her long brown hair falling over her shoulders, revealing the nape of her neck.

As swiftly and silently as one of the shadows flickering on the rafter beams overhead, Beth was beside the narrow pew, kneeling as if to genuflect and pray.

"Wendy!" she barely breathed.

Wendy looked up, as startled and unprepared as someone who has been awakened suddenly from a deep sleep.

"Mom! How did you know I was here?"

"I don't know." Beth rose halfway and paused tenuously. "I don't know. But may I sit down?"

"Okay." Wendy shifted slightly sideways to make room. They sat silently, Beth's eyes on Wendy's face, Wendy's directed downward. Whether Wendy was lost again in the thoughts with which she had come here or was simply embarrassed, Beth was not sure. She felt no urgency now to speak or even to understand. What mattered was that she had found Wendy here, and the door open.

She began to glance about the chapel, vaguely recalling the wooden beams, the lace, the shape of the colored glass. Directly ahead, just behind the altar, stood a smaller than life-size statue of a woman. She was draped in a robe of lustrous blue and dark red—a garment which would surely have been unfamiliar to the image's inspiration, Beth mused, and yet gave a pleasing impression that someone had cared what she wore. The little statue's upturned palms were outstretched in a gesture of supplication as befitted her mission of intercession, and her head supported a tiny gilt crown. The wooden face, painted smoothly in delicate colors, conveyed serenity, and the enameled eyes, though fixed in their expression, seemed to communicate compassion toward whatever reverent or troubled human soul might choose to present itself there.

Beth's eyes moved from the placid little face to the living one beside her. Wendy was looking at the statue now with an expression that was thoughtful and almost beseeching, and Beth realized that her daughter must have been drawn purposefully to this place at the front of the chapel, directly beneath that calm, unseeing gaze. For the first time, she noticed that Wendy held in one hand, bowed as if it had been pressed there for some time, a printed prayer card which she had taken from a rack in the bench in front of them. A familiar melody rose in Beth's mind as she read the words which the music had taught her.

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Pray for us sinners,
Now and at the hour of our death.

The melody ended and died before Beth spoke in a voice almost as quiet as the unheard music.

"Does it help, Wendy?"

Slowly, Wendy raised her face and looked at Beth.

"Not really. She isn't our mother, is she?"

Very cautiously, Beth let her arm come to rest on the back of the bench behind Wendy's shoulders.

"You see," she murmured, "it's the same for all of us. But we can't let it spoil everything."

Beth sat very still and very near, not quite daring to let her arm come to rest about Wendy's shoulders until the brown head suddenly pressed itself against her, and a muffled voice whispered, "Mother. Let's go home."

PERSONAL VOICES

LIGHT AND DARK THOUGHTS ON DEATH

CLAUDIA L. BUSHMAN

IN THE MIDST OF LIFE we are in the midst of death, so the old church fathers tell us, and so we realize every day as a baby dies in childbirth or a friend succumbs from a traffic accident or some foreign potentate is assassinated. *Memento mori*, remember that you must die, the medieval monks were reminded by the skulls they carried around. Yet despite good evidence we find it hard to believe that death will come to us. Surely we should prepare for the end even as we struggle onward from day to day. The great climactic moment of our lives awaits us as it does every man. We cannot escape the awful, unknown, perhaps painful and certainly inconvenient time at which people must pay attention to us and dispose of our earthly remains.

Yet perhaps no group is as sanguine and cheerful about death as the Mormons. We visualize a simple passage through a veil. We will climb the sky and wander off into the clouds to continue life as we have lived it on earth. Death is not a state, but a threshold we cross to another place to live our lives uninterrupted.

Certainly this is a pleasant notion. The family circle will gradually be reconstituted as others join from the mortal sphere. The undying love pledged on earth will continue, even as the parents, in a refined and perfected state, eternally increase the size of the circle, raising any children who left mortality before reaching adulthood as well as new ones. Just how this process will be managed in particular I have given up attempting to understand. Are we to grow ever older in eternity like so many Sarahs and Methuselahs, or will we be restored to the perfect age? Will our children remain with us or be off with families of their own? Will our time be spent in eternal meeting upon meeting? Will that ideal of patriarchal religion take over allowing us to worship as a family group? Or will our tribes be so arranged that we have large groupings of family giving us whole stakes of blood kin to administer? When all is made easy in a heavenly state, will we have any meaningful work to do? Will

initiative and imagination fade as we are all absorbed into the great body of the elect?

Who knows? and does it matter? Our visions of heaven are generally created to fit the lacks of the present life. The poor man imagines pearly gates and golden streets. The tired man envisions eternal rest. The meek will at last inherit an earth, and the powerful look for new worlds to conquer. Justice will come to the oppressed. Women hope and fear to discover their Heavenly Mother.

While pondering my own hopes and fears about death in the Mormon context, I was interested to come upon a sensitive and rather sympathetic essay by Mary Ann Meyers, an “outsider,” whose “Gates Ajar: Death in Mormon Thought and Practice” was published in *Death in America*,¹ a collection of essays edited by David E. Stannard. The title of Meyers’ essay comes only indirectly from Elizabeth Stuart Phelps’ tremendously popular novel, first published in 1868, which attempted to find some middle ground between the harsh judgements of the old Calvinism and the skepticism of the new scientific age. Phelps’ characters were persuaded of the likelihood of a future reunion with lost loved ones in a place very much like their old home. Eliza R. Snow echoed the theme of a heaven close to life in her eulogy of President George A. Smith.

He is not dead; yet death has done its work;
It came, but not in ghastliness—it as
A kindly porter set the Gates Ajar,
And he stepped forth, leaving the tenement
A breathless corpse, that slumbers in the tomb; . . .²

Death, the “kindly porter,” has come as a friend, not an enemy.

Meyers traces the Mormon attitudes on death found in doctrine and practice in the early days of the Church and concludes that “Because the Mormons posited a known and knowable universe in which they could calculate the outcome of events, death, for them, lost its dark and hidden character.”³ All our practices reflect a lack of the significance of death.

Although early Mormons suffered death rather frequently, from persecution, from the exposure and disease of the western migration and from the rigors of early pioneer life, they accepted death as part of “the plan.” Despite the grim ravages of disease and despite trails lined with graves, the faith of the Saints sustained survivors with a vision of what Thomas O’Dea has called an “extra-Christian evolutionism.” They believed in eternal progression. All tragedy and sorrow were, and are, encompassed within a wider optimistic view.

After Joseph Smith’s death, which shifted more interest to the hereafter, Meyers finds an “increasingly detailed scenario for postmortem existence.”⁴ The departed were more often described in a state of busyness—preaching, doing missionary work—than in a state of rest. Death was not to be a release from striving, but a continuation of earthlife. John Taylor noted that “For a man of God to bid adieu to the things of this world is a matter of comparatively small importance.”⁵ Of course he said this at a funeral.

The late Fawn Brodie reviewed Stannard's book for the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* and singled out the Mormon article for a characteristically heated comment. She found the Mormon "denial of death . . . virtually total" and considered the "tri-layered celestial, terrestrial, and telectual kingdom of the Mormons" the "ultimate in American fantasy heavens." She noted that "Joseph Smith's concept that the living can bring anyone who has died, including royalty, into the Mormon heaven [via temple rituals] is the most audacious of all American contributions to the denial of death."⁶

Is the Mormon position audacious? I don't think so. Rather the position is supremely optimistic. Mormons are dauntless and proud of it. I like to comment that we believe in the resurrection, but not the crucifixion; that we believe in the atonement, but not in original sin. And it seems fair to add that we believe in immortality, but not in death. The concept of the grim reaper cutting men down, of death as a punishment, a judgement for sin is completely gone. Mormons are, instead, called to new positions on the other side.

Phillipe Aries, the French historian who singlehandedly reinterpreted childhood to the world, also contributed an article to Stannard's book on death. Aries surveys European attitudes and contends that the man who is dying is deprived of his death. In the past a man was aware that the end was near, and he prepared to meet his fate. Now much effort is expended to hide the expectation of death. The solemn moment is approached, often under heavy sedation, even as the loving family and the medical staff insist that the patient will soon be well. Aries contends that family feeling requires deception and illusion to soften the sundering effect of death.

Men who suspect their impending death often pretend not to know of it lest they upset their families and the serenity of the hospital, the dying place. Some are helped to "die well" with "good taste and the courage to be discreet." Emotional scenes and the refusal to cooperate with hospital personnel constitute "embarrassingly graceless dying."⁷ While this attitude is challenged by many today, the situation is familiar to all. The survivors are often grateful that the deceased has been spared the awful knowledge of his own death.

Just as man is not to use his death to upset the living, so his mourners are not to use that death to disturb the rest of society. While mankind has traditionally mourned the passing of loved ones with tears, breast beating and hysteria; with black clothing; with seclusion from the world; Aries contends that the situation has been reversed. "It is no longer correct to display one's grief, nor even to appear to feel any." Society approves a cheerful and controlled demeanor from the bereaved. "Death," notes Aries, "has replaced sex as the principal prohibition."⁸ This removal of death from everyday life and the prohibition of mourning and the right to weep for one's dead that accompany it, may protect society from embarrassment, but the survivors are left without a suitable way to express their grief and are furthermore left alone for fear they will indulge their emotions.

Aries' conclusions seem to call for some reaction, some confrontation with death's reality. Should we attempt to tap some primal passion and express

our sorrow at bereavement with lamentations and dirges, with woeful keening and the rending of garments? In Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, Mrs. Capulet has such a scene after her nephew Tybalt is murdered by Romeo. Her anguished contortions set to the dark and dissonant chords of the ballet portray a sorrow far removed from the well-bred "niceness" we aspire to. Wouldn't the grief and anger we naturally feel at death be partially healed by such a ritual or would an attempt to return death to dramatic importance in our daily life seem only morbid?

Death comes unbidden to our homes. A surprise telephone call from my father told me that my mother, Jean Lauper, had suffered a stroke. I did not go west at once. My more capable sisters were closer at hand, and we thought we had better prepare for a long convalescence. My cheerful sister Paulie came to mother's bedside and got some response to her steady conversation and laughter. But mother did not open her eyes or awaken.

I had not seen my parents for a couple of years. We kept in touch with rare telephone calls and frequent letters. Mother was always at her best in letters, wry, clever, with specific descriptions and cynical comments. My sisters had told me that she was not up to par, but her letters continued as good as ever.

When it finally became clear that mother was slipping away, I made plane reservations and flew from Philadelphia to San Francisco. When the plane landed I called the hospital and found that Mother had died the hour before. I reported the news to my family in Delaware, and my husband said that there had been a letter from my mother just that day. He read it to me, and it was very lively, full of her latest exploits and enthusiasms. The mails have always seemed somewhat lacking since.

Everyone was too busy to pick me up at the airport, so I took the limousine downtown and the familiar commuter bus back to my girlhood home. My father was subdued and grim, but my three sisters were cheerful and busy. We all felt grateful that mother had gone quickly, without pain.

Mother's things were all about. Her genealogy overflowed the back room. The piles of fabric yardage she could never resist poked out from behind the chairs in the TV room. Her books, her souvenirs of recent journeys, her clothes, her pretty things were all around. The girls were hunting for a list of final wishes that they had seen with suggestions for a funeral and a disposition of her treasures. We searched through room after room sorting, throwing out and reminiscing before we finally found the list.

Mother had been very decided about her preferences, and we wanted to please her. The list outlined the musical numbers she wanted—only organ music, please, the name of the speaker she wanted to "say a few nice things about her," her wish for a white coffin and white flowers and the clothes she wanted to be buried in.

She had planned to buy a new temple dress but had not gotten around to it. After considering a few alternatives, we finally decided to make the dress ourselves. We are all accomplished needlewomen, though perhaps none so accomplished as the teacher herself. We all remembered her finishing up three or four little dresses the night before some event. What more fitting

homage than to be the ones to make her last dress. So Paulie bought the fabric and the pattern and set to work. We all sewed on it before it was done. Georgia, with her quick hands, turned a new nightgown into a slip.

Mother was such a skillful seamstress, so fast and so sure that she was scornful of inferior work. She taught us all to recognize a homemade dress at fifty paces. She was never challenged unless she was a yard short or had to cut around some imperfection, and she had an unerring eye for detail. Paulie added some lace to the collar and cuffs of the white dress she was making for a very attractive result. She expressed a little doubt and I saw the problem in a glance. "You know, Paulie, Mother would have centered that lace." Mother would certainly have noticed but been generous under the circumstances.

My sisters Paulie and Georgia were Relief Society presidents. Neither had had any experience in dressing the dead, but knew that that task might well fall to them some day. We discussed whether we should dress mother for her burial and decided we would. I remembered that a friend and her sisters had dressed their mother and been glad for the experience. Our Aunt Jane, the wife of one of my father's brothers, was willing to go with us and help. We thought that readying mother for her grave would be a last opportunity for closeness and service.

When I entered the room I came face to face with reality, for there was my mother, cold and dead. Her naked body had been laid out under a sheet on a high platform. Her face and hair had been nicely done, and she looked as if she were asleep. Although I knew why we had come, the shock of seeing her there, her presence so familiar and so different, distressed me greatly. We wept a few tears, trying to accept and understand the great and alarming mystery before us, and then we set to work.

Action may not always solve problems, but it temporarily removed the need to try. The question of how to confront death was put aside when the practical need became how to put complex garments on an inert and somewhat stiff figure. Aunt Jane taught us some of the necessary techniques as we went along. We worked together turning the body on one side and the other, in easing here and slipping under there. They had brought in an iron and a little board for us to touch up some of the clothes. We bustled about as if this were some regular housekeeping task, as it has been for women over the ages.

We put on the garments and the slip and the new dress. She wanted to wear her own temple robes so we put those on, including the brilliant green apron I had once embroidered for her, easily the brightest in any temple session. I also made some little white velvet and felt shoes for her for temple wear, but she had considered them too fragile to use. She had written that she would like to wear them for the occasion. In working these little shoes over her stiff, cold feet, I overcame any aversion I first felt about touching the dead.

After Mother was all dressed, we stayed around for quite a time discussing arrangements. By then we were more comfortable with her body, and one or another of us held her hand as we talked. She felt just the same, just cold.

We stepped out when the men came to transfer her body to the coffin, a white one as requested with some gold accents. We felt good about the way

she looked. We added a favorite piece of music to the coffin, “Ah, love, but a day, and the world has changed. . . .” and a ring we had found in a drawer dating from my parents’ early courtship. I felt that our morning’s work had been well done.

It has been several years since my sisters and I and our aunt dressed our mother for her long rest. I think back to that time with happiness. Our time together was not only therapeutic, but blessed, particularly for those of us who could only imagine her illness and death. In performing this final service we felt closer to mother and to each other. Death and nature came together; “dust to dust” seemed natural and good.

Mother had had an aversion to the viewing of dead bodies, and once when I was ten she told me with some heat that if I ever had anything to do with it, her body was not to be displayed in an open casket. We respected this wish, and friends who came to the mortuary found a closed coffin with a recent and flattering photograph on top.

Mother had also disliked the long ride to the cemetery at the end of the funeral service; it seemed anti-climactic. She had recently mentioned with approval the obsequies of a friend who was buried in the morning with only the family present and then had a memorial service in the afternoon. We also adopted this procedure, and I think there is much to recommend it. After the service, the bishop announced that the family would be in the Relief Society room to meet with friends, and we were all able to speak with people we wanted to see and to hear wonderful things about our remarkable mother.

The funeral itself was just as she wished it to be. My sister Bonnie, an accomplished organist, had arranged medleys of favorite music for prelude and postlude. Lucille Blake, the accompanist for many of mother’s choruses and choirs, played the chosen music, and George Aaron did, in fact, say many nice things about her. She herself seemed much in evidence. Instead of the usual recital of life events, I had edited an account out of her own history, and so her life story was told in her own words.

After the services and meeting of friends we went back to our childhood home where my father still lives and where the Relief Society had gathered the usual plenteous repast. I used to think the custom barbaric, but I have repented. The house was full of the greater family, talking, remembering and eating. It was a happy time. One of my brothers-in-law who had dropped everything at this crisis time had worked over old family movies to produce a short film with the best bits of all. I have good memories of that evening and of everything else too.

I used to dread cemeteries, but since living in the east, I have learned to enjoy them. I like to look at the varying monuments, the stonecutting. I consider the names and how long the people lived, and whether many died young, and I read the sentimental inscriptions—“Darling, we miss you” on a little stone lamb, or “Mary Jane Haws, Our ‘Puddin’”, dead at seventeen. One nearby resting family has a portrait etched in stone set in the cross above each sleeper. So much human feeling is concentrated

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade
Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap.⁹

Near my house in a quaint little graveyard rest many good people. The graves, planted with clusters of marigolds, azaleas, and plastic flowers are unevenly grouped on the overgrown turf. The fences circling the little area are covered with luxuriant honeysuckle and poison oak. Handsome granite monuments are mixed with carved wooden ones warping and weathering in the sun, and some ingenious mourners have borrowed the initialed footstones of other graves and painted the names and dates of the more recently deceased on them. None of the cold sterility of other cemeteries can be found here. All is overgrown, lively, confused, haphazard, just as in life. I have been told that this is the resting place for members of the old and only recently integrated black community.

I can imagine bodies emerging from those graves. The trumpet, loud and rough on that last day, would bring out those sleeping bodies as bulbs break through the earth in the spring.

Bodies are important, just as death is unimportant. Our long-term theological view is that the body will be reunited with the spirit at the time of resurrection. We have all been through the arguments about what happens to bodies that are buried at sea and eaten by fish or destroyed in explosions, and we feel that somehow all will be restored. But many take seriously enough the scriptural case that we will be restored exactly as we are at death to shun cremation and avoidable surgery close to death. I don't plan to donate any family organs to science. We don't want to make it any harder than necessary to gather our parts together. Even if we are somewhat decayed, worm-eaten, rotten and returned to dust, if all the components remain, we should be able to be recreated more easily.

If the parts should remain together, surely the people should remain together also. Imagined pictures of the resurrection show crowds of people emerging from cemeteries, joyfully reuniting. Surely families should be buried together. Why then do we have no burial grounds around our churches? Where are all the Mormons buried? Believing in a literal resurrection as we do, should we not be buried together in families and congregations to rise together at the sound of the trumpet? Mobility and high funeral costs have virtually destroyed the tradition of family burial plots. My own relatives are buried wherever they died—in many different places. But shouldn't we take pains and make plans to be buried together? Or if we have no families, to be buried with our brothers and sisters in the gospel?

I think that several extra acres for graveyards should be purchased when new chapels are built. Surely they are as important as parking lots. We believe in life before the cradle and beyond the grave and our facilities should reflect our beliefs. The cemeteries could be attractively landscaped and used for other purposes. I don't object to picnics and games among the monuments, and the proximity of those dead, rather than having them at some far distance, would be good for the children. If for some reason I would not rise with my family, I hope I could rise with my friends.

Two major ceremonies are enacted during most of our lives—weddings and funerals. While the legal union of two people is a fairly simple business, the surrounding panoply can turn the preparation of the event into a six-month ordeal for the bride and her family. Yet funerals, often every bit as elaborate with their special clothing, programs, foodstuffs and special effects, are pulled together in two or three days. The funeral, recording the irreversible as it does, can be considered the more important of the two rituals. We should plan things, make arrangements, think ahead and leave our affairs in order to make it easier for our loved ones to deal with our remains in accordance with our own wishes. Mortuaries with their counselors are equipped to make things as simple for us as possible, but their arrangements, of necessity, are similar and stereotyped. If we want our obsequies to reflect our own preferences, we have to make plans in advance.

Of course I have been planning my own funeral. I hope it will be a significant event with lots of ceremony, participation and homemade ritual. One of these days I will write a piece to be read which will somehow reveal the profundity, perception and charm which I did not manage to project during mortality. My husband, who is likely to outlive me because of his temperate habits and steady character, promises to give the eulogy because, as he says, he is the only person who really knows me. And, of course, I want wonderful music, powerful and dramatic, brass or booming organ to accompany the ascent of a soul to the regions beyond. Once at a concert I whispered to my son that I wanted that particular piece played at my funeral. He whipped out a pen and noted the fact on his hand, to be transferred elsewhere later. I've forgotten the piece, but methodical as he is, that music may well sing out at my last rites.

I hope to leave memorials for all my loved ones too. If I could afford it, I would build a university like the one that rose in tribute to Leland Stanford, Jr. A college library like the one that Harry Elkins Widener's family built for him at Harvard seems the most fitting of memorials. I'd like to build a park and endow its upkeep or leave my valuable collections as a public museum. But all of these memorials are far beyond anything most of us can afford.

More possible is a named scholarship for a student with special interests, a fund for books on a specified subject, a fountain in a public place, a grove of trees or even a single one. The most appealing memorial to me right now is a scholastic prize. For \$100 a year, some high school senior who had excelled in creative writing or community service could have his name on the graduation program, a nice little article in the school paper, an additional honor to list on his applications, and a very good feeling for years to come.

Even with our knowledge about the hereafter, death remains a great mystery. Yet, as Willie Loman's wife tells us, "Attention must be paid." And more than attention, we need to incorporate that great experience into our own mortal lives. There is no escaping it. Surely we do better to think of death as the climax of life, the door to the next unknown stage, rather than to deny it or to regard it as the worst thing that can happen.

NOTES

¹Mary Ann Meyers, "Gates Ajar: Death in Mormon Thought and Practice," in David E. Stannard, ed., *Death in America*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975).

²*Deseret News*, 29 September 1875, quoted in Stannard, p. 124.

³Meyers in Stannard, p. 133.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁵From the funeral of Heber C. Kimball, quoted in *Deseret News*, 1 July 1868, quoted in Stannard, p. 133.

⁶Fawn Brodie, review of *Death in America*, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 7 (Spring 1977):716.

⁷Phillipe Aries, "The Reversal of Death," in David E. Stannard, ed., *Death in America*, p. 142.

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 146, 151.

⁹Thomas Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard."



SATIRE

The Meeting

*University of Utah folklorist Jan Harold Brunvand produced a major scholarly work this fall, *The Vanishing Hitchhiker*, published by Norton and favorably reviewed in both professional and popular journals, including a half-page article in *Time* (Nov. 9, 1981, p. 116). Brunvand cites as "the most popular American folk yarn" the recurrent story of "the vanishing hitchhiker." Coincidentally, the narrative surfaces once again in the history of the following piece. A Dialogue staffer was driving to Kensington, Md., in her 1979 Ford Fairmont. She spotted a young woman on the roadside who seemed to be having car trouble, so she stopped to give her a lift. As they continued along, a large hay-wagon suddenly came out of a side-road, requiring the Ford's driver to veer sharply to avoid a collision. Regaining the road, she turned to see how her passenger was faring, only to discover the woman was gone. In her place was a slim manuscript in a manila envelope. We print it herewith unchanged.*

Scene: Inside a large, conventional meeting house. There is the usual pre-meeting hubbub. Women are busily conferring with one another over agenda and announcements; at the door, two women are shaking hands with members of the congregation as they enter, trying diligently to call each entrant by her name.

The men are hurriedly urging children into pews, settling quarrels and trying to arrange seating so that the least mayhem will ensue. Some of the men do a better job than others at juggling their paraphenalia: in addition to diaper bags and bottles of apple juice or milk, most have "quiet books," small toys, and some have rather large and cumbersome Primary materials to hang onto and keep track of.

Three or four younger men are radiantly absorbed in small bundles wrapped in fancy crocheted afghans; their fuzzy-headed infants are all dressed in special finery for the occasion, and the seats immediately around them are filled with smiling, wet-eyed grandfathers, uncles, brothers; and over the heads of the crowds, we can see visiting teachers nodding their assurance that they will be ready when the moment presents itself.

Presently, a confident, comfortable-looking woman in her late forties takes her seat on the stand. She is almost immediately flanked by two others: a slender, dark-suited woman of about thirty who keeps whispering last-minute information to the woman in the center; and a woman of perhaps sixty who appears totally unflappable, as if, having engineered reconstruction after the Flood and supervised logistics during the Exodus, she is scarcely about to be intimidated by anything the present moment might demand of her.

Behind them, on the second row, sit four men of varying ages, each in black trousers, white shirt, and black tie.

The youngest of the three women, whose name is Abbot, steps to the pulpit. She smiles silently at the buzzing congregation for a few moments, and as the crowd quiets, we hear a tiny voice call out boldly, "That's MOMMY!" Abbot smiles benignly at the child, while the father, seated in the second pew, blushes, puts a hand gently over the child's mouth, and shakes his head hopelessly at his neighbor.

Abbot: Sisters and brothers, it's time to begin. We welcome you all here, members and visitors and friends, and hope your time with us will be pleasant. Now I'm afraid we have a large number of announcements today, but they are all important, so we ask for your attention.

To begin with, Brother Hales of the Elders group has asked me to tell you that our lovely brethren are collecting empty one-quart oil cans, to be used by the group in making special Christmas projects. They are going to construct Christmas tree stands, candle molds and toys from these used oil cans, I'm told. Elder Hales has placed a large carton outside the south entrance and would appreciate it if you'd all deposit your empty oil cans there, and in so doing contribute to this worthwhile project.

Next, we want to remind you of the Education Week program early next month. Four of our members will be participating, and I'm sure we'll all want to attend and take advantage of this special opportunity. Sister Lorraine Larson will be giving a lecture on "Eschatology and Ether in the Perspective of the Book of Revelation." Sister Ellen Hemming is speaking on "The Gnostic Scrolls and Our Concept of Spirit Translation." Brother LeRuth Davis will have a workshop titled "Twenty Tips for Keeping a Tidy Garage," and Brother Terry Joe Jones will repeat last year's popular series on "Being a More Masculine You."

Brother Allen informs me that the quorum is having a special fireside this next Sunday evening with two important guest speakers. Sister Amanda Ridgely Knight will discuss "The Role of Man: Where Does He Fit in the Eternal Plan?" and Sister Alice Young Taylor will lecture on "Three Important Men from Church History."

Next weekend is a big one for the younger teens in our congregation: the Beehive class is going to kayak down the Green River, under the direction of Sister Lynn Harrison. And as I understand it, the deacons will be here at home, helping to fold and stamp the ward newsletter.

In the Young Men's meeting tonight, the boys will have something special

to look forward to—a panel of Laurels from the stake will discuss “What We Look for in Boys We Date.” Here’s your big chance, boys!

Now finally, clipped to your program you see a proposal—and I stress that that is all it is so far—for a method of handling our financial commitments for this next year. This is of vital importance to *every member*. I stress that. We want *every one of you* to go home, gather your husbands and children around you, examine this proposal, and decide if you can give us your sustaining vote on it.

(At this point, the third woman on the stand, whose name is Chaplin, gets up and whispers briefly to the speaker.)

Abbot: Sister Chaplin reminds me that the basketball team will be practicing this week in preparation for the stake play-offs Saturday. Practice will be every afternoon this week from 4 until 6. Coach Tanner has asked that every player get there right at four, or a little before, if she can. Young women, we want you to know how proud we are of you! In the same vein, the *boys’* basketball team has also been doing nicely; if I’m not mistaken, they are leading the region and also have a game sometime this next month. Practice for the boys’ team will be over in the old stake house from 5 to 6:30 A.M. this next week. Any boy having a basketball is asked to bring it, since we’re a little short on equipment for the boys’ team.

Well, I think that’s all of the announcements. We will open the meeting by singing on page 102, after which Brother Donny Dee Williams will give the invocation.

The Chorister steps to his stand and leads the congregation in the following song:

We are cooking, daily cooking
Food that strengthens, food that fills,
Casseroles that feed the starving,
Wheat from ever-turning mills.
Wheat that’s grown and ground and garnished,
Wheat that’s fiber-rich and pure,
Wheat for woman, to sustain her,
As she labors strong and sure.

After the prayer, Abbott returns to the pulpit.

Abbot: I am happy to report that our numbers are growing: we have had six babies born this last month alone! I’ll just mention each one, and you can congratulate the happy parents after the service.

Sister Jean Hammond and her husband Dale have a new little girl, to be named Rachel Sariah Hammond. Sister and Brother Ellen Taylor, a girl to be named Ellen Fielding Taylor, Jr. Sister and Brother Margaret Jones, a girl to be named Elizabeth Eleanor Jones. As you know, this baby is Sister and Brother Jones’ sixth, but the very first girl they’ve managed to have, and I just want to share with you what Margaret said this past week. Someone who

didn't know the family asked her how many children she had. "Six," she said, "and they're all girls but five!"

Now in case you think we've forgotten the opposite sex, Sister and Brother Anne Henderson are welcoming a little boy to their home; he's to be named LeWinky Henderson. Gale and Jimmy Jenson also have a new boy, to be named Tippy Tom Jenson; and Meredith and Billy Joe Gordon have a son whom they have named Fortitude Oak Gordon.

Well, our congratulations to all the families and their new members.

Right now, it's time for a special number from our Singing Fathers. They will announce their own selection.

(The four men dressed in black trousers come to the front of the stand, cluster together, place their arms on each other's shoulders, and set themselves for singing. At this point, one man whispers to another, who steps forward.)

Quartet member: We will sing "O My Mother."

After the song, Abbot returns to the pulpit.

Abbot: Thank you very much, brothers, for that special number. Now our speaker today, sisters and brothers, is a returned missionary from our congregation, Sister Eve Wentworth. Sister Wentworth filled a highly successful mission to Japan, was made a district supervisor after she had been out only twelve months, and in due time became Second Counselor to President Mariko Yashimoto of the Nagoya Japan Mission. I happened to meet President and Brother Yashimoto at conference last month, and she told me there wasn't a missionary in their mission who had been a finer example of dedication and leadership than Sister Wentworth. We're happy today to hear from Sister Eve F. Wentworth.

(In the interests of saving space and avoiding repetition, we here give, instead of Sister Wentworth's complete speech, a copy of the ward clerk's notes thereon.)

Speaker: Sister Eve F. Wentworth, recently returned missionary.

Summary of remarks: Missionary work—the central calling of House of Israel. Reason Israel was chosen of God. Greatest thing we can do to bless world in anguish. All worthy women to shoulder this responsibility. Mission also the making of character. Boys must help young women prepare for calling. Must never tempt young women or cause them to fall. Tight pants, dangers of. Bare chests an abomination before Lord. Boys don't understand female nature, how easily ignited. Must set example. Not to be cause for some young woman's unworthiness to serve mission. Use time when women are on missions to improve selves, prepare for marriage, prepare to be companion to returned missionary, conduit whereby spirits of women are sent to earth. Can be learning skills—gardening, yard work, home repair, etc. Young

women to be serious about missions—cosmic in scope. Eternal consequences. Work affects ages yet unborn, fate of nations. Prepare well. Study scriptures in depth; learn languages; social skills. Avoid getting serious abt. boys prior to call. Boys-charming distractions. Then recounted her own experiences from mission—healing sick, rebuking spirits, receiving revelation abt. impending catastrophe, directing district missionaries out of danger. Value of gentlemen missionaries. Did much good, worked right along with sisters. Need more of right kind of brother missionaries in field. Closed with testimony of work.

Closing song: “Come all Ye Daughters of God.”

Closing prayer: Sister Hannah Ruth Williams



Honor Thy Mother

RUTH FURR

IS IT THE PRODUCT of a single mind or a conspiracy? I wonder as I slide into the waxed church pew. I have been force-fed a breakfast of eggs scrambled with Cool Whip (they thought it was sour cream) and am now seated in Church to witness by far and above the most sadistic ritual of the day—the Mother's Day program, wherein our husbands, daughters and sons (under duress) are paraded before us and forced to recite party-line propaganda on motherhood.

God deliver me.

I can't help thinking of my own children's reaction to Mother's Day. My twelve-year-old is flabbergasted at the mere suggestion that he take some of his own hard-earned money to buy me a present. My ten-year-old sees no use in it but thinks a children's day would be fine. My seven-year-old is willing, but unfortunately, I explain tactfully, the picture he brought back to me from the junkyard does not fit our new, modern decor. (Don't knock it, my husband had cautioned, out of all the boys, he is the only one who thought of you while we were at the dump.)

Wonderful.

"Mid pleasures and palaces," the program begins as the congregation flounders from passage to passage of the sentimental hymn unsung since last year at this time. "There's no place like home," we sing with an audible sigh of relief at the end of the chorus.

I wish I were there.

Now we are honored with a long and pious opening prayer extolling the virtues of motherhood as if the Lord Himself needed to be reminded. The "amen" is followed by a sanctimonious welcome to "all those who have seen fit to come this day to pay tribute to that noblest of God's creations, the mother."

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Help.

Next we are subjected to an assortment of talks with titles like "What My Mother Means to Me by a Teenager," while all the time you know the little devil would rather tell you *how* my mother is mean to me. He sits down and holds out his hand to his father who, without so much as blinking an eye, returns the hostage car keys. Two different speakers address the subject of "What I Remember Most about Mother," but the conclusion is the same: God rest her soul.

Yes. She worked herself to death.

Finally some young, enthusiastic mother of six months gives up her one day off a year to tell us all about "The Joys of Motherhood."

Give her two years.

I have often suggested some alternate titles such as "Everything You Never Wanted to Know about Motherhood and Still Don't," or "Mothers: Love Them or Leave Them Alone," but so far my helpfulness has reaped only icy stares from the bishop.

Three or four ill-prepared songs have been interspersed with the talks for special effect but have served only to make me feel more uncomfortable and unworthy. Sometimes I go to bed hoarse from yelling at my children all day. Sometimes I hide in the closet and pretend I'm not at home. Sometimes I even threaten to run away if they don't stop being mean to me.

Nothing to sing about.

So far the program has moved forward in the usual manner, the obligatory number of tears and sniffles having been shed and sniffed. The day of expiation nearly complete, the service culminates in the presentation of awards.

The fertility count.

"Will the oldest mother here please stand?" the bishop asks. He might add "what's left of her," or "if she can." A sweet young thing of thirteen, tresses flying, dashes importantly down the aisle with a small potted plant.

"Will the mother with the most children please stand?" A few anxious moments tick away while rivals are quickly cross-examined as to exact number of children, living or dead, miscarriages not counting. Sister Smith is eliminated—she must sit down; but, Jones and Lewis hang tough. Two winners, two plants.

I hope this doesn't run short the supply.

"Will the youngest mother please stand?" A frowsy-looking teenager with an illegitimate baby looks furtively about for a few seconds and then leaps boldly to her feet. A horrified hush falls like a pall over the festivities. After an excessive number of throat-clearings, the bishop apologetically explains that he means to say, "The mother with the youngest baby." The teenager stubbornly remains standing, and after whispered consultations behind printed programs, it is agreed that she wins on either count.

Winners in other categories such as "the mother who has come the greatest distance," "the mother who has been a widow the longest," "the mother with the longest arms," continue to receive their awards. At last the rungs of honor descend to the lowliest of the low—the common, ordinary, garden-

variety mother, who seems to be neither old nor young, rich nor poor, fat nor slim, happy nor sad.

Nothing.

A sweet young thing hands me a plant. I look at its scraggly leaves and calculate its life span in my home.

Two weeks.

As an afterthought, the young children of the Junior Sunday School are marched to the front of the chapel to sing their tribute to mother. The expectant little faces search the congregation anxiously and then break into joyful smiles, sometimes even audible "Hi, Mom's." A three-year-old on the front row pulls her dress over her head and sticks her finger in her bellybutton; two feisty little boys engage in hand-to-hand combat while never missing a note of the song; a superior eight-year-old, arms folded Indian-style, adds a note of dignity to the general squirming.

Suddenly I realize that all these years I've been deluding myself. Mother's Day isn't for mothers. It's for children—very young children. They are the only ones with enough innocence to honor a mother; they are the only ones with enough love to appreciate her.

I laugh. Children! Where would mothers be without them?



PHOTOGRAPHY



IN CONTEXT

ROBIN HAMMOND

IN THE WINTER OF 1979 stereotypes of Mormon women were being given an inordinate amount of media attention because of Sonia Johnson's excommunication and the Church's opposition to ERA. It was depressing enough to grow up with Patty Perfect, that ever-cheerful, well-organized, bread-baking embodiment of Mormon Sisterhood. She and I were old adversaries. Now she was being joined by Patty Programmed, the oppressed non-thinking ultra-orthodox tool of sexist church leaders. It was too much. I felt a fierce desire to show the world Mormon women as I know them: liberal, conservative, eccentric, conforming, irreverent, pious, domineering, submissive, confident, fearful, happy, depressed: sometimes all of the above in one person. Our differences may be masked by our shared convictions, but they certainly exist. Beneath our Mormon facades we differ and agree in a multitude of ways.

So I took my camera and tape recorder and stalked friends, relatives and sisters. To establish each woman's context, I photographed her doing something she loved in a setting where she felt most herself. This helped her to be relaxed and natural in front of the camera. It also pictorially linked her with the activity she loves most. Each sister was interviewed with a series of questions designed to elicit her feelings about herself. The resulting quotes were not intended to explain the pictures, but to complement them; to give more depth to the context.

"*In Context*" is a work in progress, unfinished. Like a mosaic, each woman's individual truth links with that of her sisters. The One True Mormon Woman exists, but not as one. She is many, and she is unique.



Betsy Blaylock



Kristine Kuehl

I wouldn't want to fix cars for a living, but you never know. I've never liked to sit behind desks or in an office. It drives me crazy. I like being outside.

Betsy Blaylock

I hate that word "housewife." I'm not married to the house. I'm married to my husband. My main responsibility is not to the house, it's to my family. I'm not tied to the house at all.

Kristine Kuehl

Working with children is what I do better than anything. My classroom was a place where I was never ever lonely. The children would all walk in and hug my legs and I'd pat their heads. It was the best place in the world to be.

Bonnie Brackett



Bonnie Brackett



Hilda Hills

A hard passage in my life was when I lost a child. I felt to blame, she was so beautiful. Actually, I don't think she ever came to us. She just looked into heaven and smiled. When she died, that made me know that I had to start thinking for myself. I began to make decisions. It was a hard way to learn.

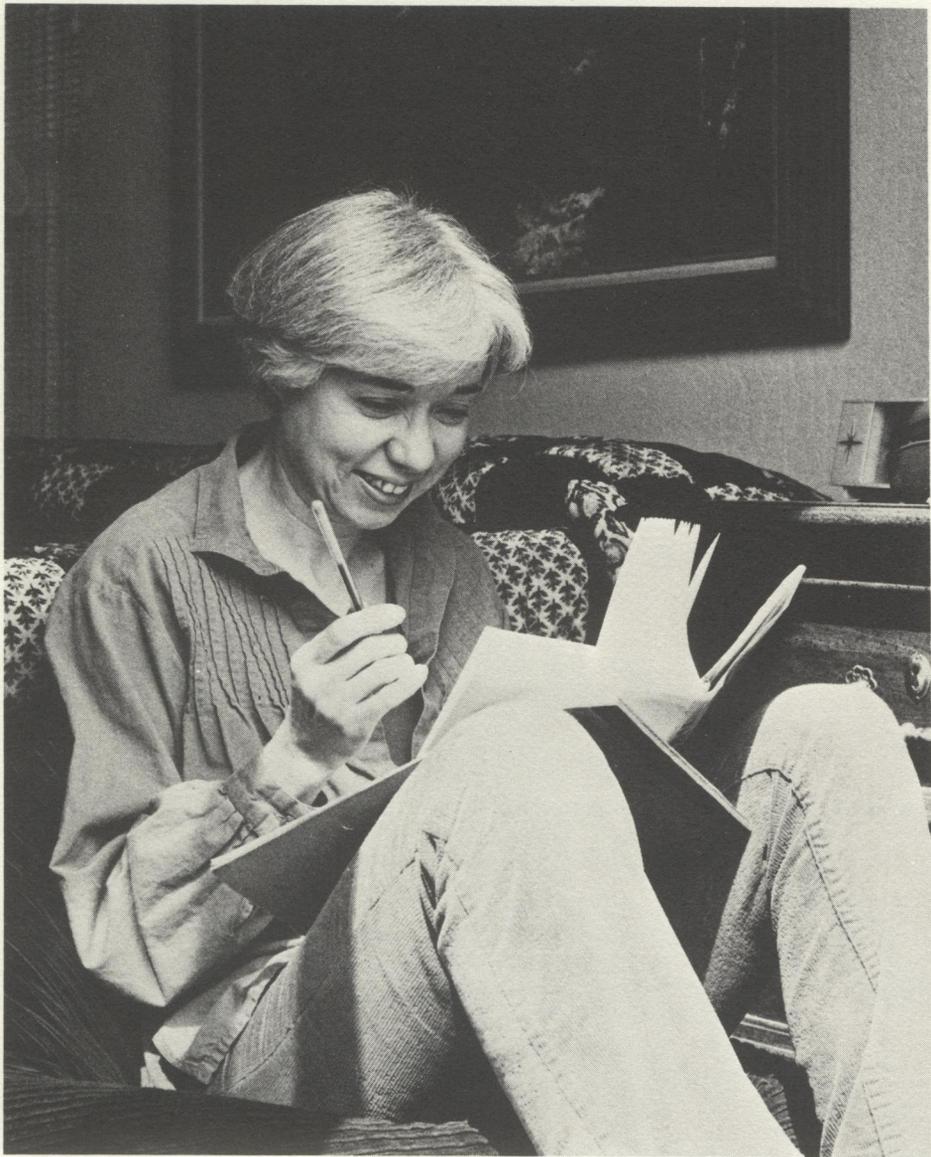
Clara McIlwain

I was twenty-one the first year that women could vote. In fact, I worked for the vote. I was a suffragist. I was not a Suffragette. That type of women were a little rough. I don't like the modern organization either. But I've always had a cause to work for. I worked for the Red Cross in 1914 and I was a Farmerette. Now that I'm older I don't mind being home.

Hilda Hills



Clara McIlwain



Carol Lynn Pearson

I would most like to be remembered as somebody who helped to heal this broken home of ours and invited our Mother in Heaven back. I think that on all levels we must get our Mother back. If I could, that's what I'd do.

Carol Lynn Pearson

I'm so definite about some things. Like my funeral. It's been planned forever. It's going to be all women, no men, except to officiate. I admire men, and I think they're great, but I want women speaking at my funeral.

LeOra Zundel

My parents hoped that I would become an operatic diva. They encouraged me to the fullest and sacrificed to promote me and pay for lessons. I worked, and all my money went for voice lessons. My voice teachers gave me two lessons for the price of one because I showed so much promise. What happened to this dream? Well, I got married. That's what happened to it.

Myra Myszka



LeOra Zundel



Myra Myszka



Marti Lythgoe



Gail Baugh

Ideas renew me. It renews me to be around people with exciting ideas, new ideas— or to read exciting ideas.

Marti Lythgoe

I don't need something outside my home to show me I'm worthwhile. Having a career isn't important enough to give up my freedom. Being at home is how I feel free.

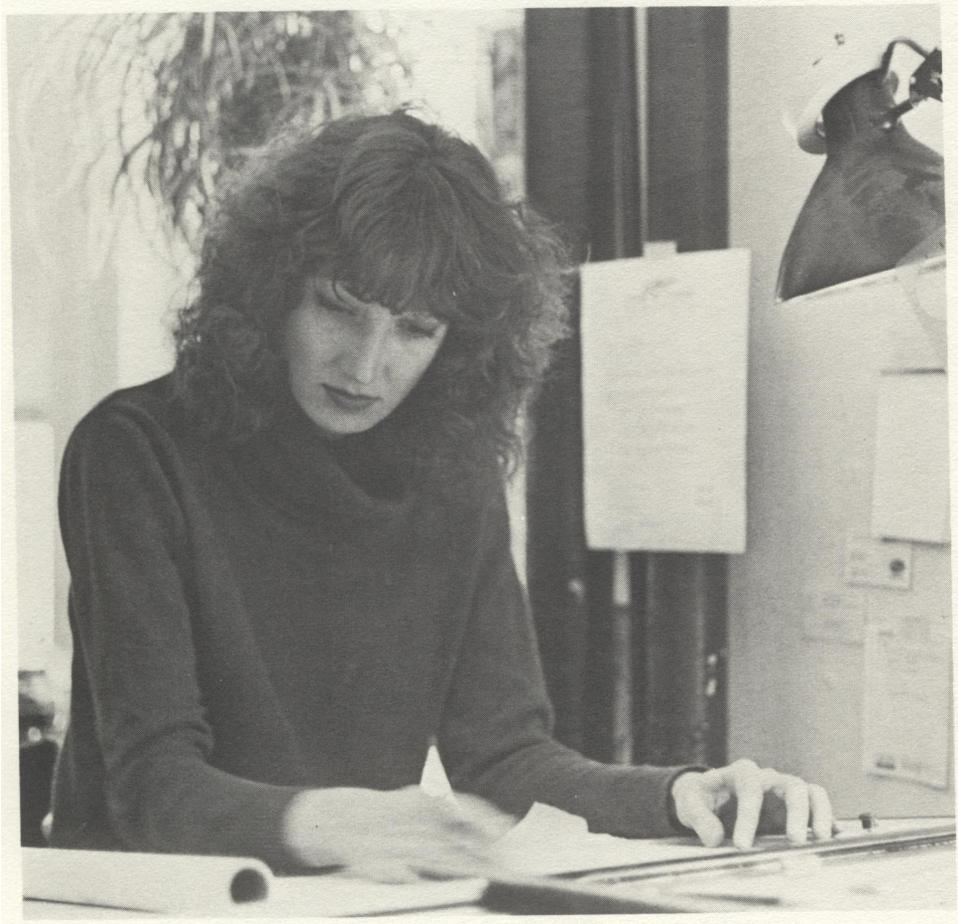
Gail Baugh

I was the meanest little girl you ever saw in your life. My father taught me how to box, and I was the toughest little girl in the town of Rio Vista. There was no boy even a head taller than me that I couldn't deck with one blow.

Pat Kling



Pat Kling



Renee Tietjen

I remember as a child, going out and playing in the sand and constructing elaborate little cities. I remember digging up marigolds and planting them in special places so they would be trees. After I had chosen to be a landscape architect it suddenly dawned on me that I had done this as a child, and I had enjoyed it then.

Renee Tietjen

While I was at BYU I took one semester at Salzburg. At the end of the semester I toured England alone, which had been my dream, with my British railway pass. I came home thinking, "I can do anything! I have seen the other side of the world!" After that I stopped being so self-conscious about what I looked like or what I could do or couldn't do. I felt so much more self-confidence.

Valerie Clark

Putting ourselves into another time and place, imagining how we would dress, can be a transcendental experience. When I discovered the German romantic writers as an undergraduate, I felt like I'd come home because they capture that feeling of home-sickness so well.

Sandy Straubhaar



Valerie Clark



Sandy Straubhaar



Alison Morera



Judy Willis



Beth Francis Titensor



Laura Webber Decker

During World War II I worked at Mare Island in the optical shop mostly on bore sights. The guns were set by these bore sights, so accuracy was a life and death matter. After the war I worked at Benicia Arsenal for several years. I felt terrible when I couldn't work anymore. I just adored working.

Laura Webber Decker

Having a baby gave me a feeling of confidence and self-worth. It's an amazing thing to know your body can do that. It sounds crazy, but it made me feel, "Wow! It really worked! I can do that!"

Alison Morera

From the time I was a child I was taught to believe in natural healing and in working with nature instead of against it.

Beth Francis Titensor

I like to paint. I like to sew and do needlework. I like to bake. I teach wheat and gluten classes. I like to do flower arrangements. I love to work with wood—just anything where I can use my hands.

Judy Willis



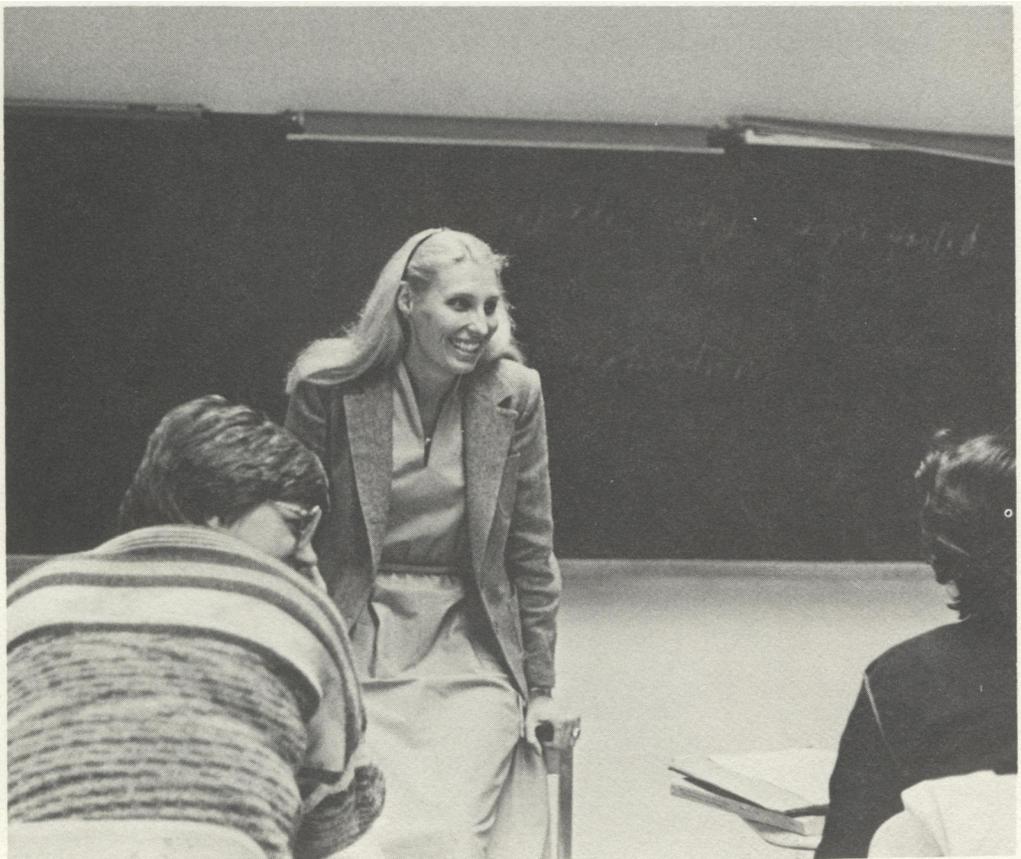
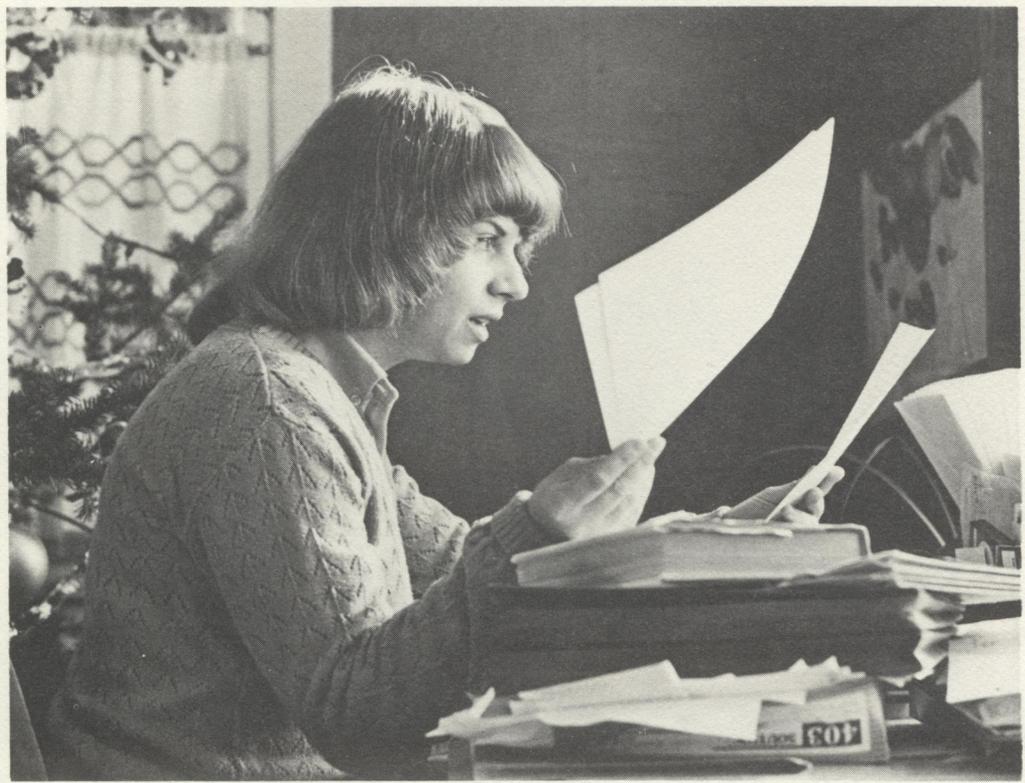
At one point I was in a state of depression that I could not shake. Every day I thought of suicide. I just wanted to die because I could not understand what was wrong with me. Finally I prayed for a whole day and the answer came. It came so strong I knew I had Heavenly Father behind me. It gave me strength to stand up to the world and say: "I can do anything!"

Caroline "Carrie" ZitzEvancih



I'd always liked art galleries, but I never knew what I was looking at. One day in Boston I went to the gallery and heard my first docent explaining a Madonna. All of a sudden this painting just came to life. It was like turning on a light. I felt it was opening a whole new world.

Ruth Ellsworth Knudson



What I would like to do is somehow take the world that I know and put it on paper. I don't think that the Mormon world really survives on paper yet. I used to be just paralyzed by worrying about offending anybody—my best friend, my mother, my husband, my bishop—afraid that someone might be offended or think that Mormons are anything less than absolutely wonderful. I don't have that fear anymore. I just want to write.

Linda Sillitoe

There is strength in the differences between men and women. When they work together, the decisions that emerge are better than the decisions they reach independently. Women and men tend to draw different conclusions from the same data, but when the conclusions are synthesized the resulting decisions are fantastic.

Diane McKinney Kellogg

I've always been interested in politics. It's a very natural thing for me. I think it's important to be a contributing member of society. If you don't want the real crazies to take over, you have to be involved.

Judy Ushio



REVIEWS

Three Communities—Two Views

Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century. By Lawrence Foster. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981. 363 pp., notes, biblio., index. \$19.95.

Reviewed by LOUIS J. KERN, who is assistant professor of history at Hofstra University.

In his *History of American Socialisms* (1870) John Humphrey Noyes emphasized the equal importance of revivalism and socialism to the communitarian movement. "The Revivalists," he wrote,

had for their great idea the regeneration of the soul. The great idea of the Socialists was the regeneration of society, which is the soul's environment. These ideas belong together, and are the complements of each other. Neither can be successfully embodied by men whose minds are not wide enough to accept them both.

This perception provides the framework for Lawrence Foster's analysis of the Shakers, the Mormons and the Oneida Community.

Foster argues that these millennial movements, guided by charismatic, pragmatic founders, provided a creative environment that made possible psychic and social regeneration. For individuals whose sense of religious security had been shattered by pervasive doubts and who were acutely affected by the disintegration of community and the ethical ambivalence that characterized the rise of industrialization, these communities

offered not a retreat from social order but a laboratory in which a new complex of religious and social values could be developed and tested. In short, they provided their adherents with "a new and more satisfying center around which to organize their lives."

Foster asserts that these communal movements represent serious attempts to restructure and reorder social life; they were not, either from an individual or a group point of view, negative, pathological responses to social and ethical alienation. In pursuing this line of argument, he aligns himself with a new generation of scholars who are reexamining and reevaluating the foundations, ideologies and social practices of the communitarian movement in America. Like Foster, these scholars (most of whom employ interdisciplinary methodology) are more sensitive to the serious commitment and idealistic aspirations embodied in these communities, and place their "success" in the social and personal rather than the political and economic realms, in the micro rather than the macro structure of the social order.

Foster's analysis provides a sound reading of the historical development of three evangelical communities based on a composite anthropological model emphasizing transition from social crisis and anomie to a new social order, and the process of growth in communal societies. Paradoxically, he finds that ". . . underlying these efforts at radical social change was an essentially conservative religious impulse . . .", that these communities were "'backing into the future.'" In the light of Foster's emphasis on self-denial and self-control as the essence of the

social and sexual behavior of these communities and their attempts to break down the code of romantic love so central to Victorian sentimentality, one wonders whether such radical change was not retrograde rather than progressive. Certainly, twentieth-century sexual sensibilities have arisen in a context of romantic love, and the progress of both societal and sexual ethics in the modern era has been toward less rather than more control and denial of the self and its velleities. The paradigm that most closely parallels the sensibilities of these nineteenth-century millenarians is that of the seventeenth-century New England Puritans who also insisted on the control of the will, the essential detachment from erotic life and the subordination of the individual to the communal interest.

In discussing changes in traditional sex roles and alterations in the sexual division of labor among these communal groups, Foster clearly distinguishes the subtle differences between them, but his perception of their fundamentally progressive nature renders his evaluation of changes in these areas somewhat too sanguine. As a consequence, his interpretation of their founders is too indulgent. While it is true, for example, that Ann Lee had "an intense concern to correct the imbalance that she perceived in the relations between the sexes," she also repeatedly admonished women to subordinate themselves to their husbands. She was deeply concerned about the sexual and maternal exploitation of women, but apart from this seems to have accepted the regnant patriarchal doctrines governing sex roles. Indeed, although she played a dominant role in the Shaker movement, she does not appear to have been concerned with expanding the religious authority of women. As Foster points out, the system of co-equal sexual "orders," which became characteristic of Shaker ecclesiastical polity, was instituted by Joseph Meacham after Lee's death. The dual "orders" maintained equality of authority in Shaker communities, but only in separation; women governed the female population and men the male. The rationale for this equal feminine power had perhaps more to do with insistence on strict separation of the sexes than it

did with any concern that women be granted equality in the religious realm.

Patriarchal Mormon polygamy, as Foster aptly notes, ironically provided a broader scope for women than has been traditionally assumed. Yet, when he points out that women voted earlier in Utah than in any other state or territory, he does not consider the political pressures which played a significant part in the granting of woman suffrage there. Mormons were concerned with the arrival of large numbers of Gentiles in the Territory and hoped by the enfranchisement of Mormon women to retain the political balance of power.

In terms of the essentially restrictive nature of communal sexual relations, it is no doubt true that "pleasure was not the primary goal of sexual intercourse." Nevertheless, for these communities the perception that eroticism characterized Victorian sexual sensibility provided the impetus for their various systems of sexual restraint. At Oneida, anxiety for sexual self-control issued in the system of "male continence." Paradoxically, that system insisted on restraining male orgasm while providing full erotic pleasure for the female. Female orgasm was not, as Foster suggests, an "unintended side effect" but rather an integral part of the system. The practice of *male* continence legitimized the ideological superordination of the male in the religious and social hierarchy of the Community. The rationale for changes in sex roles, then, may often be as important as the fact of change itself. A consideration of both is necessary for a fuller understanding of the nature of sexuality in communitarian societies.

Religion and Sexuality is an essentially sound interdisciplinary study of the social evolution and cultural dynamics of three sectarian communities. It quite properly emphasizes the intricate interrelationships between the development of religious doctrine, communal life and social change. The motivations and aspirations of both founders and members of these communal experiments are taken seriously and treated with dignity as manifestations of legitimate alternatives to dominant Victorian culture. Emphasis on the cultural creativity and religious

genius of charismatic prophets, however, obscures fundamental issues of their hierophantic and social power. For, as Vilfredo Pareto observed of utopian reformers (*The Mind and Society* [1935], IV: §2097¹): "The man who can do what he pleases with the sentiments [religious and erotic life in this instance] of human beings can also, within certain limits determined by other conditions, give society any form he pleases."

The author's response:

Louis Kern's thoughtful review of my book *Religion and Sexuality* captures many of the key themes of that work. My underlying concern was to understand at the deepest possible emotional and analytical levels why and how all three groups set up alternative systems which significantly restructured relations between men and women. Although aware of the disorder and excesses associated with these experiments, I was chiefly struck by their degree of success in creating a new order for their members. I believe that Kern's work in *An Ordered Love* and my own study reflect many common concerns. But our approaches were somewhat different, even as we dealt with similar materials. I tended to see the glass as half full, while he tended to see it as half empty.

Kern is correct in identifying my intellectual debt to John Humphrey Noyes, founder of the Oneida Community and the greatest contemporary historian of the communitarian movement of which he was a part. It is no accident that the quotations that introduce both the first and last chapters of my book were from Noyes. His dominant concern throughout his life was to achieve a balance between the seeming polarities of existence, both in his own life and in the lives of his followers. Writers have variously described these polarities as those between "male" and "female," "yang" and "yin," "apollonian" and "dionysian," "structure" and "anti-structure" and in a host of other ways. I agree with

Noyes that every society and every individual experiences dialectical tensions between these paradoxical polarities and must continually strive to keep them in some sort of creative, though ever fluctuating, balance if full health is to be maintained.

The great strength and the great weakness of Kern's own book is suggested in the opening paragraph of his review of my work. There he states that the framework for my analysis of these three groups can be found in John Humphrey Noyes's observation emphasizing the equal importance of the "Revivalists" and the "Socialists" to the antebellum communitarian movement. Although I do happen to agree that the religious revivalists and the secular associationists (or as Noyes called them, socialists) provided the key impetus for antebellum communitarianism, I was puzzled that Kern saw this as the key to my analysis. After all, I only alluded to the passage, in passing, on pages 86 and 87 of *Religion and Sexuality*, and then, specifically with regard to Noyes's own efforts, not those of the Shakers or the Mormons. Interestingly, however, that passage is highlighted on the first page of Kern's introduction to *An Ordered Love*. Could Kern be reading into my book his own insights, rather than understanding my book for what it is in itself? In this case, his point was well taken, but in some other instances the result is less convincing. As this example suggests, the strength of Kern's work lies in his often astute hunches about the materials he studies. His weakness is that even when the materials may indicate something else, he still tends to reinterpret them to fit his own prior perceptions.

In summary, *An Ordered Love* appears to be less a treatment of sex roles and sexuality in the Shaker, Mormon and Oneida communities, than a personal essay that uses these groups as a foil for Kern's own present-day concerns. Although *Religion and Sexuality* was also informed by present-day concerns, I believe that it comes closer to representing what these three groups really were trying to do and did in fact accomplish.

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Three Communities—Two Views

An Ordered Love: Sex Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Utopias—the Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community. By Louis J. Kern. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981. 430 pp., notes, biblio., index. \$24.00, hardbound; \$12.50, softbound.

Reviewed by LAWRENCE FOSTER, who is assistant professor of American history in the School of Social Sciences at the Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta.

This study seeks to look analytically at the reorganization of sex roles and sexual expression in three of the most controversial religious movements of nineteenth-century America—the Shakers, who practiced celibacy; the Mormons, who introduced a form of polygamy; and the Oneida Perfectionists, who developed a type of group marriage. Previous comparative accounts of these three groups have tended to be superficial and unsatisfactory, particularly in dealing with their sexual beliefs and practices. *An Ordered Love* is an attempt to provide a serious treatment of these much misunderstood experiments.

Although Kern's work and my own in *Religion and Sexuality* were conceived and written entirely independently of each other, they nevertheless deal with the same three groups and address similar issues. Both studies attempt to place these groups into their larger social and intellectual context. Both recognize the importance of religious and theological concerns as an underpinning for their sexual experimentation. And both pay much attention to the changing role of women in these movements. Topically, our works

are also in certain respects complementary. My analysis focuses on the origin, introduction and institutionalization of the alternative sexual and family systems, while Kern's is more concerned with the systems themselves and how they functioned after they had become established.

Yet there are significant differences between our two studies, both in philosophical approach and in the ways we researched and presented our evidence. My orientation was essentially anthropological, informed by comparative perspectives from other cross-cultural studies of millenarian movements such as those of Anthony F. C. Wallace, Kenelm Burridge and Victor Turner. Based on research in fifteen major collections across the country, including four months of the first intensive research on polygamy ever conducted by a non-Mormon in the central Latter-day Saint Church Library and Archives in Salt Lake City, I attempted to reconstruct what these three groups were trying to do and how well they succeeded in terms of their own objectives.

By contrast, Kern's study is essentially Freudian in orientation, modified by his strong commitment to ideological feminism and his work in American studies. Although Kern does make some effort to learn from these groups, he is primarily interested in evaluating their degree of success or failure in terms of his own analytical categories. His book is structured in three parts. The general introduction, drawing heavily on work in American studies, discusses the concerns about self, sexuality, and society which were reflected in nineteenth-century America. The sections on the three groups are then introduced by capsule psycho-

biographies of their founders, based on Freudian analytical categories, which argue that the emotional problems of the founders were the key factors leading them to introduce new forms of sexual organization among their followers. Finally, the longest and most important parts of the book deal with the alternative systems themselves, judging them in terms of the degree to which they did or did not achieve full equality between men and women.

Many of Kern's objectives in *An Ordered Love* are admirable; the weaknesses of the book stem from the degree to which those objectives are in fact realized. The study suffers from serious deficiencies in research, factual accuracy, and conceptualization which reduce its usefulness either to the scholar or to the general reader. Although Kern has done more research than most previous writers on these groups, he has not mastered the available literature on them. Research for the book was almost entirely conducted in four libraries, three of them in the greater New York City area. Kern's work on the Mormons, in particular, is inadequate by scholarly standards. No research was done in the extensive Mormon archival and printed collections in Utah, including the indispensable holdings of the LDS Church Archives which were fully open to non-Mormon scholars during the past decade. More disturbing, Kern appears unaware of many of the key secondary studies on the Latter-day Saints that relate to his work. Although the Mormon chapters concentrate primarily on the Utah period, the book does not even cite Leonard Arrington's *Great Basin Kingdom*, the most important and influential study on Utah Mormonism in the nineteenth century. The treatment focuses on polygamy, yet does not even cite Kimball Young's *Isn't One Wife Enough?*, the major book-length analysis of that topic. Kern seems unaware of the basic Mormon historical periodicals, much less the proliferation of recent scholarly research that has been published on the social aspects of polygamy. His work on the Shakers similarly fails to take advantage of the two major Shaker manuscript collections at the Western

Reserve Historical Society and the Library of Congress, the holdings of which were both available on microfilm while he was writing the book. Only on the Oneida Community has Kern mastered the available primary literature, including the manuscript materials held at the Kinsey Institute, and it is no accident that this section constitutes the strongest part of the study.

Even when it is based on weaknesses in knowledge of sources, a book can have much merit. Kern does, indeed, present some interesting and provocative hypotheses on these communal experiments. Yet the numerous factual gaffes that appear throughout this book are nevertheless disturbing. Ann Lee, who founded the Shakers, had four pregnancies, not eight. She was not married "about 1753," but nine years later on January 5, 1762. The first anti-Shaker polemic was not published in 1783, but in 1781. The Mormons currently number not 2.5 million individuals, but closer to twice that number. Joseph Smith's vision of Moroni that Kern cites did not occur on September 21, 1830, but on September 21, 1823, seven years earlier. The Oneida Community was not established on land in Madison and Lennox counties, but rather on land in Madison and Oneida counties, with holdings in the towns of Vernon and Lenox (with one *n*). Particularly disturbing to the social historian is Kern's penchant for making flat pronouncements in the text on the sources of membership in these groups, when a close check of his notes often suggests that his assertions are based on tiny and unrepresentative samples. Such factual weaknesses are perhaps trivial in themselves, but they are unfortunately also reflected in serious misunderstandings and interpretive half-truths throughout the book.

The introductions to the core chapters on these three groups begin with highly reductionistic and poorly informed psychobiographies of their founders. The treatment of Joseph Smith, which is basically a warmed-over version of Fawn Brodie's interpretation, is characteristic of the veneer of scholarly objectivity combined with self-righteous superiority that

is found in the three psychobiographies. Smith, in summary,

was a strange mixture of fiery Old Testament religious inspiration and frontier sharpness and chicanery. In his psyche a delicate balance was struck between a knowledge of his own guilt and the need to be considered innocent and saintly by his friends and neighbors. Years of experience had taught him that those whom he had duped and used would often be most vociferous in defending his innocence rather than risk the public derision that the exposure of their own folly might entail. The knowledge of his own guilt, however, necessitated some atonement, which he realized through his role of victim. And his church of Saints was created in his own image.

Any serious psychoanalyst today would hesitate to jump to conclusions about what was going on in the innermost recesses of a patient's mind, yet Kern is prepared, without even reading Smith's manuscript letters and writings or accounts of those who knew him most intimately, to pass a flat judgment on his motives that even Fawn Brodie ultimately shied away from making. Note the hostile and sensationalistic words which are used in the statement: "chicanery," "guilt," "duped," "folly," "victim." How does Kern know what Smith really thought and felt?

A similar style of analysis also characterizes the treatments of Ann Lee and John Humphrey Noyes. It is clear that an element of psychopathology was present in these individuals, but for Kern to criticize Ann Lee for her "voyeuristic obsession with the sexual irregularities of others" and then himself voyeuristically dwell on her most extreme statements to the exclusion of more tempered and reflective ones seems to be to reduce a very complex and remarkable woman to a psychological caricature. The analysis of John Humphrey Noyes is even more disturbing, in view of the authoritative psychoanalytically-oriented study by Robert David Thomas, *The Man Who Would Be*

Perfect: John Humphrey Noyes and the Utopian Impulse. Based on prodigious research in the primary Oneida materials and in recent literature on ego psychology, Thomas has shown how Noyes, though riven by conflict and full of contradictions, was nevertheless able to find the strength to reconcile those contradictions and create a warm and loving community for himself and his followers. Such a complex and highly differentiated portrait is largely missing in the stick figure of Noyes that emerges in *An Ordered Love*. Indeed, I have often thought that a more interesting exercise than writing a Freudian analysis of John Humphrey Noyes would be to use Noyes's own sophisticated sexual theories to analyze Sigmund Freud's life and work! Truly original thinkers must be understood, at least in part, in their own terms, instead of being forced into some other mold in which they do not fit.

One of the most admirable features of this study is the attention it gives to the theological concerns and beliefs that underlay these movements. Few previous comparative treatments of these groups have recognized the fundamental importance that religion had for them. Even Mormonism often has been viewed simply as a bizarre product of its antebellum social milieu, with no inner integrity and coherence of its own. Yet although Kern correctly recognizes that religious concerns were closely linked with sexual experimentation in these groups, he often fails to understand fully the theological beliefs themselves. If he has difficulty grasping a belief such as the Mormon conception of the godhead, he conveniently dismisses it as "rudimentary, unsophisticated, and often contradictory." While it is true that early Mormonism, like almost all other millenarian movements including Christianity itself, was eclectic and highly syncretistic, the important point is that there is an internal logic in successful movements by which apparent contradictions are overcome or held in creative tension. Dismissing a belief one does not fully understand as "contradictory" does little to advance historical scholarship.

Occasionally, as in his statements that early Mormons were "not concerned with the problem of selfishness" and that "private property was at the very heart of Mormonism," Kern completely misrepresents the early Mormon emphasis. It unequivocally stressed that individual concerns and advancement were to be subordinated to those of the group. Mormons today may sometimes seem to be the ultimate advocates of "free enterprise," at least at the national level, but in the nineteenth century they were staunch opponents of the disruptive individualism which had increasingly come to prevail during the Jacksonian period. Not to understand this is to fail to grasp the heart of the early Mormon movement.

The most valuable and well-researched sections of this study deal with how the alternative systems set up by these three groups restructured relations between men and women. In these sections, especially on the Shakers and Oneida Perfectionists, Kern provides an extremely detailed and generally reliable assessment of life in their post-Civil War communities. His work on Oneida is particularly explicit, even including information from the papers at the Kinsey Institute on acceptable sexual positions used in that community. Kern in these sections moves somewhat away from Freudianism toward ideological feminism. He stresses that all of these groups, even the Shakers, can be criticized for not giving women complete equality with men. He also points out that, contrary to popular opinion, Mormon polygamy was by no means uniformly degrading to women. These conclusions, though hardly surprising to anyone familiar with the primary materials, nevertheless provide a useful corrective to popular accounts which tend to idealize the role of women in the Shaker and Oneida Perfectionist communities and condemn the Mormon treatment of women.

Yet when Kern has shown by massive and well-researched evidence that a group such as the Oneida Community raised women's status by comparison with the larger society but failed to usher in a sexually egalitarian millennium, what has he demonstrated? None of these

groups made any pretense that they believed in total equality for women (or for men either). Instead they argued that the individual desires and activities of both men and women should be subordinated to the good of the larger community. One wonders how useful it is to criticize people of another age for failing to achieve our own, imperfectly realized, standards of absolute equality for men and women if they were, in fact, trying to accomplish something quite different.

When contrasted with most previous comparative treatments of these groups, *An Ordered Love* has important strengths, both in terms of the extent of its research and the quality of its arguments. Yet the study is frustrating because it could have been so much better than it is. Although Kern has sifted through large amounts of material, particularly on the Shakers and Oneida Perfectionists, his use of that material is often unreliable and he writes in a diffuse and convoluted style. In analyzing the ways relations between men and women actually were restructured in these communal experiments and how such restructuring was related to the changing role of women in Victorian America, Kern has made an important contribution and raised provocative hypotheses for further investigation. Yet the study ultimately fails to pull together its evidence and insights into a fully coherent and convincing whole.

The author's response:

Lawrence Foster's reading of my book *An Ordered Love*, although apparently a detailed one, does not ultimately achieve a level of thoughtful, critical evaluation that might better have served the interests of his readers and contributed to a more thoroughgoing historical understanding of questions of religion and sexuality in communitarian movements. He has carefully identified several errors in the text of my work. Indeed, in some cases he has located legitimate typographical errors and editorial oversights, and I must stand in his debt for the consideration and time invested in the arduous process of ferreting them out. Unfortunately, he has not always exercised the same care and zeal in correcting them that went into their discovery.

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Foster is correct in stating that the first edition of the earliest anti-Shaker polemic was not published in 1783, but neither was it published in 1781 as he maintains. The pamphlet in question, Valentine W. Rathbun's *Some Brief Hints of a Religious Scheme, etc.*, was published in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1782. The version I have used throughout, however, is the New York edition of 1783. Other questions are less clearly matters of fact but rather matters of sources and interpretation. It is true that Ann Lee bore four children, but that does not preclude her from having been, as Shaker tradition maintains, pregnant eight times. The estimate of the number of Mormon adherents, which appears in a footnote in my book, was derived from the *New York Times*. No doubt Foster's estimate, informed as it is by close contact with members of the Church, is more accurate. It remains true, however, that all estimates of total church membership are problematical. The current estimate of total membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints given in the most recent edition of the *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* gives a total of 2,706,000, a figure closer to mine than Foster's.

It is especially difficult to review a book closely paralleling one's own in thematic concern. The problem of achieving a measure of openness about the subject is particularly taxing. While there will always be questions about sources consulted, interpretation and the underlying philosophical assumptions of any historical work, they appear more significant and may be weighed disproportionately the closer one is to the subject of the study in question. From this perspective, Foster's review was somewhat disturbing in its insistence on viewing my work through the prism of his own and in a perhaps over-zealous attempt to insure that certain aspects of his own work are not overlooked.

Foster attacks the psychobiographies of the founders which appear as brief introductions to the three major sections of my book as reductionist. He overlooks my caveat that "these biographies are not intended to be complete but rather suggestive of the relationship between the experiences of individuals and the

ideological and structural dimensions of the communities they founded." He also obscures the sociological dimension of my work in his concentration on psychological matters. My aim in this work was not, as Foster implies, to examine these communities as outgrowths of the psychopathology of their founders, but rather to investigate the ways in which their personal concerns and problems overlapped with those of nineteenth-century American culture as a whole and provided institutionalized solutions to problems of sexuality and sexual roles that other individuals who became members of these communities found sound and sensible.

These three religious communities arose in a context of nineteenth-century anxiety over the role of the self in society, the function and place of the family in American culture and the nature of proper sexual behavior for the individual as it developed in the consideration of the two preceding questions. I have attempted to view these voluntary societies throughout my book as representative of social and sexual alternatives to broader nineteenth-century American culture. As the title of my book indicates, I view these communities as attempting to reconstitute an orderly, stable relationship between the sexes that is grounded in a patriarchal vision of society. Foster's concentration on the psychobiographical thus misrepresents the overall concern of my book and provides an inadequate notion of the tendency of its analysis and interpretation.

Despite their similarities, *An Ordered Love* and *Religion and Society* are very different books. Foster is concerned with the history of the development of these three communities, and especially with the creative religious leadership of their founders. He discusses communal sexuality primarily as an outgrowth of religious and moral concern. My work focuses on questions of sexual ideology, sexual behavior and sex roles as central organizing principles in the development of the communal social structure. Theological and moral concerns provide an essential foundation out of which alternative visions of the relationship between the

sexes develop, but they are not the primary focus of my work.

There is a fundamental difference as well in the philosophical assumptions underlying the two books, as Foster implies in his response to my review in his use of the somewhat clichéd metaphor of the two perspectives on a glass of liquid. Indeed, basic assumptions about human nature inform all historical accounts and have provided the basis for some of the more acrimonious disputes among the practitioners of the discipline. To the extent that our interpretations of the sources and our various readings of historical reality are conditioned by our fundamental responses to man and his motivations as an historical actor, we all fall somewhere along a continuum stretching between a Pollyanna-like optimism on the one end and a Chicken Little pessimism on the other. Certainly my vision of individuals involved in these communal experiments is more pessimis-

tic than Foster's, but that should not be allowed to obscure the fact that in many ways our two books are complementary since the difference between them is not simply a matter of personal point of view but rather a question of looking at the same phenomena from different angles of vision. When one person has a mule by the head and another by the tail, they frequently disagree as to the general nature of the animal. Each is convinced that the other is largely mistaken about the characteristics and behavior of the beast. That seems to be the case here. But such disputes are ultimately fruitless. If each of our books in its own way contributes to an ongoing historical inquiry into the nature of these communities and sparks others to further investigation, it will not have been written in vain. It is now for others to describe this communal animal from unique perspectives that will reveal other aspects and provide alternative interpretations of its essence.

How She Did It

"A Good Poor Man's Wife": Being a Chronicle of Harriet Hanson Robinson and Her Family in Nineteenth-Century New England. By Claudia L. Bushman. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1981. 276 pp. \$18.00.

Reviewed by ELOUISE BELL, *an Associate Professor of English at Brigham Young University, specializing in creative writing and women's studies. A former member of the Young Women's General Board, she currently teaches in the Relief Society of the Orem 54th Ward.*

In the summer of 1979, the Modern Language Association, with financial support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, sponsored a five-week institute on "non-traditional writings of women." The institute was held at the University of Alabama, directed by Leonore Hoffmann, and taught by three full-time faculty plus many one- or two-day

lecturers, including Florence Howe of the Feminist Press, Kate Stimpson of *Signs*, novelist Toni Cade Bambara and many others. By discipline, the faculty and guest lecturers were historians, literary critics, specialists in oral history, literary theorists, folklorists, poets, novelists and publishers. The "student body" for this high-powered group consisted of twenty-five university professors from across the country, of whom I was one. All of us together were trying to wrestle with one knotty problem: just what should be the position of the "non-traditional" writings of women? What is the place of journals, diaries, letters and oral histories in the accepted literature of a culture? Where do books like Claudia Bushman's *"A Good Poor Man's Wife"* fit in?

Such kinds of writing have been, in the past at least, the most common material written by women. So in one way, it is incorrect to label these materials "non-traditional." They are, for women, quintessentially traditional. But—and here's

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where the MLA institute came in—these letters and diaries and “odds and ends” have never been part of the *traditional canon* of literature. That is to say, they have not shown up on college reading lists. They are rarely mentioned in classroom lectures. Scholars have not dedicated their lives to the study of these materials, as they have to the peculiarities of the *Pearl* poet, the dating of Shakespeare’s folios, the themes of Blake, the psychology of Melville, the symbolism of Lawrence, the structure of Sartre. For decades and for centuries in English-speaking colleges and universities, certain genres have been traditional, respected and accepted without need of defense: the drama, the poem, the essay, the novel, the work of literary criticism and, more recently, the short story. Diaries, letters and journals were important (a) if they shed light on a notable figure, or (b) if they were stylistically interesting in and of themselves. Such letters and journals were usually the work of prominent male writers (there were almost no female writers in print) or of women closely allied to prominent male writers.

In the last fifteen years or so, however, as a result of much hard work by feminist scholars, a central truth has emerged: though women have seldom *published*, they have always *written*.

We cannot here go into the history of women’s publication, but suffice it to say that even when women overcame the enormous barriers and put good material in the hands of a publisher, if that material were *known* to be by a woman, it was rarely published. (In the middle of the nineteenth century, the situation started to change, but almost entirely at the popular or commercial level, rather than at the serious literary level.) But, even when the idea of publishing a book or a poem was the furthest thing from their minds, women *still wrote*. And what they wrote were letters (the number of letters women wrote a hundred years ago would astonish us today), diaries and journals.

Because men published, we know how men, or some men, thought and felt. Our understanding of the workings of the human heart, which is what we seek from our writers, came almost entirely from the male side of the family tree. On the other

hand, because women published so rarely, we have, *in the traditional canon*, little record of what the female half of the race thought and felt. But the diaries, journals and letter collections recently discovered (the jargon term is “excavated”), we now have access to material that tells us how women thought and felt, what they did with their lives, what the shape of their days and years was. Literary scholars, historians, cultural anthropologists, feminists generally and all women interested in knowing about their former-day counterparts have rejoiced over the wealth of information becoming available through these excavated manuscripts.

Bushman, in her “Acknowledgments,” claims that she was drawn to her particular materials in the Schlesinger Library on the History of Woman in America (located at Radcliffe College) because that repository was “the pleasantest of archives in which to work and only ten minutes from my home.” Moreover, she says, Harriet Robinson’s character had value for her “in working out [her] own destiny.” Neither of these reasons, of course, is intended as serious apologia for the work. In her “Introduction,” Bushman addresses the question a bit more directly, pointing out that a narrative about an ordinary family “holds considerable significance in this day of growing interest in family history and plain people” and going on to affirm that the lives of the Robinsons are “useful in understanding the nonrich, nonfamous people of the past.”

Well, after a fashion, that does make a start in the direction of answering the question, “Why publish such a book?” In the past, in addition to being overwhelmingly from the male perspective, our accounts have been either of the rich or of the famous (who were often, though not always, rich as well).

Obviously, however, every excavated manuscript cannot and should not become a book. That is one of the common misconceptions about the value of such records. When a newspaper article was printed widely across the country mentioning that I was going to teach a class at BYU in “Women’s Journals Then and Now,” I received scores and scores of let-

ters from people who wanted to know if I would be interested in making a book from their Aunt Minnie's diaries or from Great-grandmother's letters.

The reality is that while such letters and diaries are very important and should be preserved in some repository such as the state historical society library or the archives of a state university, their value is that of one or several pieces in a very large, multi-pieced puzzle. These records should be available for scholars and writers to consult as primary source material of the first order. But only occasionally do such materials become books, and then usually not for the reasons the family members might expect—because the ancestor “lived an exciting life” or because “she wrote such beautiful poems and descriptions of things.”

We might generalize and say that the personal writings we are talking about become books for one of three reasons. First, because family members are interested enough to subsidize the printing of such a book, intended mainly for consumption by family members and a small additional circle. I think of a personal history currently working its way into print: *Man of Multiple Dreams*, the life of A. B. Christensen, a prominent Utah educator. This is a beautifully researched book written with great skill by his daughter, Lucile C. Tate. This is not the work of an objective historian or biographer, but a balanced, broad overview of a man's life as his descendants would be interested in knowing about it. At the other end of the spectrum, some personal writings are used as the bases for books because the figure involved is of major significance and because the biographer has grasped, through the study of that figure, some central truths about the period, truths which are in themselves of considerable importance. An example here is Martha Saxon's work, *Louisa May: A Modern Biography of Louisa May Alcott* (Avon: 1977), or the even more brilliant award-winning study of Alice James (sister of William and Henry James) by Jean Strouse.

The third kind of book is one such as Claudia Bushman has written. Harriet Hanson Robinson has no particular claim

to fame, but rather was a very minor figure on the fringes of the great abolitionist and suffragist movements of her day. Nonetheless, because of Bushman's thorough, careful work as a historian, future scholars will have insight into the aspirations, labors and strivings of a woman of that particular position and station at that particular time. Bushman's work is helpful in understanding how a woman moved from what we would today call the lower-middle-class (or even the lower class) to the solid middle—and why that move was important. What did it mean in terms of personal identity? In terms of work and a certain freedom from the endless round of household work? *A Good Poor Man's Wife* tells us. It also tells us, though perhaps not so fully as it might, what it meant to be a woman with ambition and energy and capacity in the nineteenth century, and what it meant to struggle with oneself to bridle those forces, to guide them rather exclusively into domestic paths. Had Harriet Hanson Robinson had the opportunities open to her husband, she would almost certainly have gone much further with them than he did. But those opportunities were not available—indeed, the Robinson women seemed to feel the need to frown on wives continuing with any sort of public career. Interestingly, though, once her husband was dead, Harriet resumed public activity with considerable relish.

It is important to understand that we have these insights because of the scholarly work Claudia Bushman did. Simply publishing selected excerpts from HHR's papers would not have resulted in the same achievement at all. History, quite as much as art, is in the eye of the beholder.

Bushman writes in an organized, interesting way, and her book is highly readable. There is an occasional lapse into a rather “inside-out” approach to things—as though the author were on the right track, only backwards, or upside down. For instance, she reads a poem of Harriet's called “My Choice,” in which HHR clearly claims she is “serene, content” to “roam in sunlit paths” with her husband. Discussing the verse, Bushman says “the poem indicates that Harriet's sunny optimism about married life sometimes failed

her." The *poem* indicates no such thing. What the biographer surely means to say is that the sunny optimism expressed in the poem is belied by other evidence. In another instance, Bushman refers gently and with some concern to the Robinsons' "marital practices" and says they were "carrying on their marital relationship," i.e., having sexual intercourse, while their eight-year-old son slept in the same room. After using these euphemisms (her own, not Harriet's), Bushman then says, "Harriet was too inhibited to write candidly of pregnancy in her diary!" As a historian, Bushman surely knows that virtually all of our ancestors were begotten while older siblings slept, or lay awake, in the common bedroom. But these are minor flyspecks in what is basically a solid, well-done book.

It would be illuminating for members of the Church to read, at some future date, just *how* Harriet Robinson's character figured into Claudia Bushman's working out of her own destiny. Bushman is, among other things, the mother of ten, the founder of *Exponent II*, a teacher of history and literature and the editor of a book significant in the history of twentieth-century Mormon feminism, *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah* (1976). Countless Mormon women are trying to work out similar destinies, trying to combine the joys and duties of home, family and Church, with the not-to-be-denied yearnings for wider scope in the world at large. Bushman has told us how Harriet Robinson did it in the nineteenth century. Let us hope we don't have to wait for a biographer to tell us how Claudia Bushman did it in the twentieth.

Carefully Crafted Cocoon

Chrysalis. By Joyce Ellen Davis. Salt Lake City: Olympus Publishing Co., 1981. 170 pp.

Reviewed by MARGARET R. MUNK, freelance writer and member of *Dialogue's* editorial staff.

When I saw that Joyce Ellen Davis' newly published novel, *Chrysalis*, dealt with a young mother's experience with cancer, I was disappointed—but only temporarily. The theme seemed to be perhaps too obvious in its dramatic appeal and therefore overused: vibrant, life-loving young woman encounters forces beyond her control likely to bring about her death. Again.

To say that a theme has been used before, however, is not to say that every writer could handle it as skillfully as Mrs. Davis has done. It is not surprising that the Utah Arts Council judged her manuscript the grand prize winner in its annual literary competition for 1979 and awarded her a grant which made publication possible. This short, artistically written novel grasps the reader's attention quickly and

holds it throughout, making one admire the author, care about the central character and suspect that they are one and the same.

One of the book's greatest strengths is the skill with which it portrays in fine detail both the clinical aspects of treatment for a malignancy and the inner state of the patient. The more I read, the more certain I became that Mrs. Davis had a very personal reason for choosing her theme. Her publisher, Olympus Press, states that Mrs. Davis has described the work as "autobiographical fiction." It seems safe to assume that the author understood from personal experience the feelings of Jody Harper, the fictional mother who discovers, between the births of her fourth and fifth babies, that she has a malignant melanoma, that immediate surgery is necessary and that her chances for long survival are slim.

This much we learn in the first four pages of the book. The rest is a chronicle, in small, carefully crafted segments, of Jody's present thoughts and reflections on the past during the year that follows. The

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holds it throughout, making one admire the author, care about the central character and suspect that they are one and the same.

One of the book's greatest strengths is the skill with which it portrays in fine detail both the clinical aspects of treatment for a malignancy and the inner state of the patient. The more I read, the more certain I became that Mrs. Davis had a very personal reason for choosing her theme. Her publisher, Olympus Press, states that Mrs. Davis has described the work as "autobiographical fiction." It seems safe to assume that the author understood from personal experience the feelings of Jody Harper, the fictional mother who discovers, between the births of her fourth and fifth babies, that she has a malignant melanoma, that immediate surgery is necessary and that her chances for long survival are slim.

This much we learn in the first four pages of the book. The rest is a chronicle, in small, carefully crafted segments, of Jody's present thoughts and reflections on the past during the year that follows. The

principal message is the value and wonder of earthly life, down to its smallest details, which take on a new significance for one who knows that she may be experiencing them for the last time. As the book ends with the outcome still uncertain, Jody reflects, "I respect each hour. I have learned not to waste my time in futile lethargy. It's a good world and a good life. . . . I hold it as carefully as mortal fingers will allow."

There is also a lesson here in the meaning of suffering, probably as wise a lesson as can be drawn from the difficult puzzle of human experience. Having achieved a kind of mental and spiritual victory over physical circumstance, Jody concludes, "If I'd had a choice, I would have chosen not to host this hidden battle. I am a cowardly soldier, shy and unwarlike. But I know now that there is wisdom in tears. Pain does come from darkness, and it *is* pain. Sometimes it is also wisdom."

I enjoyed and appreciated *Chrysalis* for two important reasons: The style is beautiful, and the central character comes through with vivid appeal.

Each chapter, each segment, gives the impression of having been shaped and re-shaped. From the "fox-hunting, deer-stalking, big-game traffic" of the first paragraph to the children chasing each other "in and out of the forest of adult legs" on the Thanksgiving Day with which the book closes, one imaginative phrase follows another. Jody's free-flowing thoughts are occasionally sprinkled with interesting poetry, and it is not surprising to learn that Joyce Ellen Davis is a poet as well as a prose writer. She also imparts to Jody a wry sense of humor; this saves the book from becoming maudlin.

Jody comes across as a real person. Even to one who has not shared her experience, her thoughts and feelings and the changes through which they pass seem right and believable. She *did*, as does a person mourning the death of someone else, pass through a series of emotional stages—from angry denial, through depression and fear, to acceptance, hope and gratitude for what is good. There *were* days and moments when thoughts would ascend or descend

into other-worldly realms of light or darkness; others when, despite the gravity of the situation, she was forced to return to the realities of children's needs and household responsibilities. There *were* both deep love and occasional resentment toward the optimistic husband who determined to take it a day at a time and keep life as normal as possible, even to the point of expecting his shirts to be laundered and the checkbook balanced. Jody has strengths and weaknesses, doubt and faith, despair and hope. She is human enough to be endearing, but she possesses an unusual flair for living which one feels must have been hers even before her brush with death.

The other two principal characters—Jody's husband, Mark, and her closest friend, Jenny—also stand out as personalities, even though we see them only through Jody's eyes.

As a would-be writer intimately acquainted with the demands of a young family, I am somewhat incredulous when Jody, the mother of several small boys, seems to find considerable time to lie on the floor and listen to music, to write long letters, to read, to teach a writing workshop, to write a book. But I cannot quarrel with the evidence here in my hands that Joyce Ellen Davis, young mother of five sons, has indeed written a good book.

Chrysalis left me dissatisfied in only one respect, and it is a dissatisfaction which I do not think would be shared by a non-Mormon reader. Under circumstances which could call forth any religious ideas and feelings a person might have, Jody's religion, both personal and institutional, remains mostly a mystery to us. Mrs. Davis may have avoided identifying Jody's religious affiliation in the interest of appealing to a wider-than-Mormon readership; I am not sure the avoidance was necessary for that purpose. Occasional clues, however, lead a Mormon reader to understand that Jody has been reared a Saint. Yet there seem to be a number of inconsistencies in Jody on which religion should have a bearing and into which I would have enjoyed some insight.

We learn almost nothing of her childhood. We do not meet Jody's parents until

the final scene, and we learn very little about them from her mental flashbacks. We do learn that she had religious training and still goes to church; but her present stance toward God and afterlife is one of curiosity and hope rather than certainty. As an adult, she apparently has a warm relationship with her parents and at least a tolerance for her church, but some of the ideas she must have absorbed from both seem missing at a critical time in her life. The prospect that she may have to leave her husband and children much sooner than she had expected intensifies her love for them but does not seem to invoke the concept, even the question, of eternal family continuity which one would expect in someone of Mormon background.

We do see Jody, through flashbacks, as a young, unmarried woman, and there is much in her youth which is not typical of girls raised by kindly but religiously orthodox parents such as Jody's turn out to be. They do not appear to be the type who would either directly encourage their children to be mavericks or drive them to it by their own religious rigidity. There are indications of adolescent rebellion on Jody's part, but no enlightenment on the seeds from which her particular rebellion grew or the forces which apparently mellowed it with time. Jody had a brief career as a budding actress, and has formed her strongest and most lasting friendship with the warm-hearted, free-wheeling

Jenny. Her premarital sexual experience has left a residue of guilt and regret but does not seem at the time to have caused inner conflict of the magnitude likely in a strictly indoctrinated Mormon girl. Such girls may suffer occasional lapses in parked cars, but they do not generally slip away to shoddy Mexican hotels with rakish actors. Although we share some of Jody's and Mark's courtship, we never see how, psychologically speaking, Jody moved from her parents' home to that hotel and back again to a home of her own with five babies in rapid succession.

Certainly such inconsistencies are possible in human beings, especially during the growing up years; and Mrs. Davis is not obligated, having wisely chosen a stream-of-consciousness style, to present Jody's entire inner or outer history. But having become interested in Jody, and feeling I would understand her religious conflicts if allowed to see them, I was disappointed to be left doubtful about some important aspects of her life, mind and soul.

This objection aside, I find that *Chrysalis* easily passes two tests I apply to any piece of literature I have just met. The first is "Do I wish I had written it?" I do. The second I take from one writer's statement that a good book is a service performed for a stranger. I am a stranger to Joyce Ellen Davis, yet she has performed a valued service for me and for many others who will read her book.

The Animal Kingdom

Thy Kingdom Come, by Peter Bart. New York: The Linden Press/Simon & Schuster, 1981. 380 pp; \$13.95.

Reviewed by SAMUEL W. TAYLOR, beloved of Dialogue readers everywhere and a well-known novelist, biographer and autobiographer.

As every author knows, the blurb on the dust cover of a book is of vital importance, because many reviewers read nothing

else. I found the blurb of *Thy Kingdom Come* invaluable after reading every word of its 380 pages, because only the blurb tells what the book is about.

When I taught a course in the art of writing for the San Mateo adult education program, I stressed the importance of letting the reader know, as quickly as possible, what the story is about, after which, feeling oriented and comfortable in being acquainted with the situation, he can follow it through to see how things come out.

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This is only Peter Bart's second book, and he hasn't learned about this basic rule of the craft. Matter of fact I found it extremely difficult to hammer the point across with some students of my class; one woman handed in chapters of a novel during the school year, and my comment each time was, "What's it *about*?" I was mean enough to bring her to tears, sobbing with her head on the desk, but she finished the book—which was well-written otherwise—without giving the reader a clue as to what the story *was*.

From the jacket blurb, I learned that *Thy Kingdom Come* was about "The Mormon nation, powerful, wealthy and obsessively secretive," this being

the focus of this sweeping and dynamic novel about power and its potential for corruption. At its heart is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, where all doubts are banished, all questions answered and no member need ever stand alone. Nurtured by its vast welfare system, which renounces federal support, and by a superbly run educational system, which zealously upholds the Church strictures against drinking, smoking, and premarital sex, it is an island of safety amid the maelstrom of American Society.

But then comes the teaser: "And yet, something is amiss," the blurb says. "Like the secrets of its history—a history of bizarre paradoxes—turmoil seethes just beneath its calm surface."

Dog-gone me, with a blurb like that the Mormon reader is hooked. Unfortunately, however, the book doesn't live up to the promise of the hype. The novel has no central character. There is no central theme. While there is much to-do about some complex business deal, it is so complicated that I was thrown off at a curve. And, whatever the book is about, there is no payoff.

It is, I believe, the first novel since Vardis Fisher's *Children of God* (1940) to deal with the highest echelons of the church hierarchy. Its characters (under fictitious names) include the First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve, and other high-level movers and shakers of the

church bureaucracy. The antics of this cast provide shock value, if nothing else.

A major character is Tad, clean-cut, well-connected, who has married the right girl at the right place, the temple. Tad is a rising young executive in the church business enterprises, hard-working, hard-drinking, and foul-mouthed. When he was a young missionary in Tonga, he had attended booze-and-sex parties aboard a yacht. Now, with a model family in Salt Lake, he visits his mistress in Los Angeles, because his wife won't indulge in kinky sex and the girl friend knows all the tricks of turning a trick. All in all, Tad is just your typical returned missionary, rising through merit and nepotism in the church bureaucracy.

Tad's mother, Eliza, is head of the Church Relief Society, highest office held by a woman. She is a widow, and is having an affair with Turner, who is the head of the Church Public Communications Department.

Turner, in turn, is secretly supplying confidential information to Hiram and Gussie Cobb, who are publishing a *samizdat* periodical. We instantly recognize the Cobbs as Jerald and Sandra Tanner of Modern Microfilm, dedicated to exposing Mormonism as a fraud and delusion.

The Cobbs are secretly subsidized by, of all people, Cora Snow, matriarch of a popular singing family who have a motion picture studio at Provo and are producing a TV series featuring two family members doing a toothy brother and sister act. Guess who that could be?

Then there is a Howard Hughes-type billionaire, Dana Sloat. "As the novel opens," the blurb says,

the Mormon Apostles have convened and designated an industrialist named Dana Sloat to head the Church's vast financial and political activity. Only a few know that Sloat is a fanatic who believes the time has come for the Church to fulfill its own Manifest Destiny as the guiding force in American society and who has his own blueprint to achieve this end.

Dana Sloat becomes First Counselor in the Presidency. And how does he get the

office? Well, the First Counselor resigns, stepping down to make room for him. Dog-gone, for a Gentile Peter Bart really knows how the church is run, doesn't he?

But that's not all. Dana Sloat has a son who is head man of a Fundamentalist colony in the Arizona Strip patterned after Ervil LeBaron's group. Its male members are Danites who have a hit list. On the list is the *samizdat* publisher, Hiram Cobb, who is kidnapped and murdered while being tarred and feathered.

Finally the church hierarchy decides that Dana Sloat has got to go. But instead of just pulling the rug, the Church President calls the secret Council of Fifty to assemble in the temple and give Sloat the mitten, for reasons I can't fathom except that the author had to get the Council of Fifty into the book, if by the hair of the head.

Had enough? Well, there's more, if you're still with me, including some of the crudest four-letter dialogue you'll find in a Mormon book. Maybe high-level

church members talk that way. I dunno, because I'm merely a low-level member myself. In fact, I suspect my bishop gave me a job with an imposing title (titles don't cost anything) in a desperate attempt to activate me. Poor guy.

At last report, Peter Bart was trying to sell his book to Hollywood, and claiming that church pressure was keeping it off the screen and tube. If so, I wish the Church would back off. The book would be a marvelous companion piece to *Superman*, *Star Wars*, *Tarzan the Ape Man* and other fantasies. It has about the same basis of fact. I have written considerable fantasy myself, but never anything as wild as *Thy Kingdom Come*. I think Hollywood might change its mind if Bart could get Bo Derek to play the Relief Society President, with her boyfriend, Robert Redford, cast as the head of the Church Public Communications Department and Marie Osmond playing the kinky girlfriend of Tad. With such a cast, he'd be in like Flynn.

Weaving A Mexican Webb

Uncertain Sanctuary: A Story of Mormon Pioneering in Mexico. By Estelle Webb Thomas. Salt Lake City: Westwater Press, 1980. 146 pp. \$11.95.

Reviewed by PAUL B. DIXON, professor of foreign languages at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana.

One of the strongest virtues of this volume is the modesty of its project. It does not claim to be the story of Mormon pioneering in Mexico, but simply a story of the same. It makes no attempt to duplicate or surpass the contributions of such fact-filled works as Thomas C. Romney's *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico* (1938), Nelle Spilsbury Hatch's *Colonia Díaz: An Intimate Account of a Mormon Village* (1938), or Annie Johnson's *Heartbeats of Colonia Díaz* (1972), each of which relies to a considerable extent upon documentary research and attempts a record for a

relatively large group of colonists. Rather than a product of research, *Uncertain Sanctuary* is more a Proustian "recherche," a highly personal collection of memories. Rather than presenting a view of community accomplishments, the book focuses upon those of a single family and its close associates. For its narrow field of view and its selection of particulars, the book is a good complement to histories already written, for it provides a sense of daily living and dying which the more collectively oriented accounts have sacrificed. Generically speaking, the work is a personal history, like a journal. This should by no means suggest that it has no value to the general reader; on the contrary, this is perhaps Mormonism's most universal and successful form of literature to date.

Uncertain Sanctuary records selected moments in the family life of Edward Milo Webb and his three wives, Ellen Ashman,

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Uncertain Sanctuary records selected moments in the family life of Edward Milo Webb and his three wives, Ellen Ashman,

Sarah Elizabeth Carling and Charlotte Maxwell. The time period is 1898–1912, which takes members of the family from their departure from Woodruff, Arizona, along successive moves to Colonias Dublin, García, Pacheco and Morelos, to school in Colonia Juárez and finally on their exodus to El Paso, Texas. The author is a daughter of Edward and Charlotte; she writes in the first person, and indeed personally participates in nearly every episode narrated. Through supplementary materials, every attempt has been made to lend coherence to Mrs. Thomas' impressionistic account. An introduction by former Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall and his wife, Ermalee Webb Udall (Mrs. Thomas' niece), gives historical background on the Mormons' Mexican colonization and on the family, with particular attention to Edward Milo Webb. A "Dramatis Personae" helps us keep track of who is who among the large polygamous family, Church officials and figures in the Mexican government. There is a short chronological listing and even a glossary explaining the meaning of terms from the Mormon vocabulary.

The text itself is a cascade of episodes from the pioneer life. We read lively accounts of a runaway wagon, home talent shows, visits from gypsies, church dances, a kidnapping by revolutionaries and a gun smuggling expedition, to cite just a few. An experienced writer, Mrs. Thomas knows that a small detail often makes the difference between an ordinary image and an extremely vivid one. For example, a flood destroys most of Colonia Oaxaca and washes away numerous trees from the family's property in Morelos, but its destructive force is most acutely described when a daughter sobs at the loss of a sardine-can soap dish, tacked to one of the fallen trees. The colonies are generally made to seem like a *locus amoenus*, a lush refuge close to paradise. But the author skillfully tempers this impression of sanctuary with the impression of mutability and uncertainty, by weaving accounts of a brush fire, a flood, and a child's accidental witness of an old man's dying agony, amid otherwise idyllic childhood memories. These solemn intervals effectively serve as forebodings for the final chapters, with their stories of

kidnapping, murder and pillaging by revolutionaries, tortured insecurity on the part of the colonists and the ultimate exodus with its shock of displacement.

Uncertain Sanctuary should have special appeal to those interested in pioneer women, for the women are the most completely described characters in the book. Mrs. Thomas' mother Charlotte is a particularly hearty and humane character. She drives wagons, teaches school, fights brush fires, manages a hotel, "fudges" at customs and effectively takes over for a father who must share his time among families. Readers should not expect to find a story of the trials borne under polygamy; this narrative makes it seem a completely workable practice, out of which the three Webb wives emerge as paragons of selflessness. One of the book's most arresting and poignant anecdotes involves this theme. The story is told by a close friend, Aunt Diane, of being unable to bear children, and of receiving a son from her husband's second wife: "Look at him, Diane. This is the child you could not bear. I, I had this one for you. . . . Take him, Sister Diane, with all my love."

Almost in spite of itself, the book portrays the cultural isolation of the Saints among the Mexicans. When speaking generally about her native neighbors, Mrs. Thomas is usually congratulatory. But when she speaks of individuals, her descriptions, almost without exception, reveal condescension or distaste, if not revulsion. The girls lose their appetite when Amador, one of Papa's employees, comes to the dinner table. The young students make fun of the garlic breath, the physical appearance and the manner of their Spanish teacher, Señor Giles. A Mexican uses Sister Webb's oven to bake a local delicacy (a cow's head), which with its smell nauseates all *gringos* within a quarter-mile radius.

It is hard to be critical of a personal history, because "mistakes" are often so informative. Mrs. Thomas' occasional errors in Spanish orthography (in place names and occasional bits of "local color") are mistakes of this type, for they support what she says about the women's difficulties learning the language—the women worked at home, while the men learned

to speak "like natives from their association with Mexican workmen"—and show her fearlessness about using the language in spite of these difficulties. Other flaws do not have this value. There is some ambivalence about the audience for the book; while it seems directed towards the general reader, occasionally there are details that could only be interesting to Aunt Edna or Uncle Bob. The book includes several excellent photographs; it should have stayed with these and done without the numerous maps reproduced from outside sources. These add very little information and in fact tend to be con-

fusing because they do not show the Mormon colonies.

This is probably the last eyewitness account of the Mexican colonies we will have (Mrs. Thomas was 90 when she wrote the book). In their introduction Mr. and Mrs. Udall predict the book will become a Mormon classic. Mormon classics are not easy to produce these days, and it seems unlikely that the Udalls will prove to have the gift of prophecy in this case. Nevertheless, *Uncertain Sanctuary* is a vivid memoir of pioneer life which deserves to be read broadly and enjoyed.

Brief Notices

GENE A. SESSIONS

As the "ERA missionaries to Utah" were knocking on their first doors in the late spring of 1981, the Reagan administration announced that Rex E. Lee, dean of BYU's J. Reuben Clark Jr. Law School, had accepted an appointment as U.S. solicitor general. While only the most embittered liberal might suggest that the two events had any connection, anyone who had read Lee's polemic against the proposed amendment entitled *A Lawyer Looks at the Equal Rights Amendment* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1980, 141 pp., \$7.95) could not have missed the significance of it all. Having previously served as an assistant attorney general in Washington, and with his current service as head of BYU's law school (is it really just a "Jr. Law School?"), Lee comes to his new job with eminent qualifications, and with his distaste for ERA, he virtually guaranteed himself a spot among the legions of Mormons already in Reagan's army. Lee's basic argument against passage of the Twenty-seventh Amendment is the same one the Church applied on page after page of its insert in the *Ensign*,

"ERA: A Moral Issue." The proposed amendment is written in such ambiguous and "broad terms," writes Lee, "that the only way its meaning can be ascertained is by adjudication . . .," which most certainly takes away from the people the right to determine sexual distinctions in such areas as combat, family law and labor regulations and relegates these decisions to five old men who might form a majority on the Supreme Court. President Reagan has thus appointed to argue government cases before that high court a man who would have sided with the anti-Federalists in 1787. Their argument, after all, was that the proposed Constitution was too ambiguous and cast in such broad terms that it would require constant interpretation and adjudication.

When Lee took office in that city of Greek wedding cakes, he was undoubtedly able to rest easier knowing that among the Mormons as among the Reaganites he is in friendly territory. A member of his ward in Virginia or Maryland will probably hand him a copy of Maurine Ward's *From Adam's Rib to*

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When Lee took office in that city of Greek wedding cakes, he was undoubtedly able to rest easier knowing that among the Mormons as among the Reaganites he is in friendly territory. A member of his ward in Virginia or Maryland will probably hand him a copy of Maurine Ward's *From Adam's Rib to*

Women's Lib (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1981, 175 pp., \$6.50) to assure him that Mormons and Republicans are really the best friends women ever had, and that so-called "feminism" is something of a fraud in that it denies this cardinal truth: "Woman is equal to man; but though they have many common abilities, she is not identical to him. She and he are born with some inherent differences that may lead them to make different choices in life." Lee may not wonder much about where Ward's argument leads, such as to the same old pasture in which Elsie chews her cud and suckles the calves while Elmer markets his glue and spreads the bull, but inasmuch as Ward would have us believe that women "have come a long way, Baby, and that's far enough," we bestow upon her our bovine bounty known as the Milk the Mormons Award. After all, because women are women and men are men, milkmaids are milkmaids and milkmen are milkmen. They thus have to make such different choices when they approach the great udder of life.

If life in America was ever full of irony and difficult choices for women, then the time must have been during and immediately following World War II as Rosie riveted and Alma plowed and Lucy wore a uniform. But as the vacuum of war had created dizzying opportunities for women, so the pressures of returning soldiers at its end crushed expectations. Wallace Stegner's short stories about women and war (written at the time) should be of particular interest to Mormons who now contemplate the plight of the modern American woman and who are not attracted to such drivel as *From Adam's Rib to Women's Lib*, not only because of Stegner's Utah/Mormon connection but because of his great skill as an observer of life's complexities. Comprising eighteen Stegner stories, *Women on the Wall* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981, 277 pp., \$16.50 cloth, \$5.50 paper) represents the author at his subtle best. He probes the lives and frustrations of a whole spectrum of wartime women, coming to the inevitable realization that whatever we may wish, there are and have never been easy answers to the questions now raised within the women's movement and the

resistance to it. Even in the one or two stories in which women play only a cryptic rather than direct role, the impression comes through powerfully that woman's place is somehow tied inevitably to man's whims. In "The Volcano," an American and a Puerto Rican are philosophizing about three peasant girls whistling as they labor in a field. "It is a strange thing," says the American, "this whistling." The Puerto Rican shrugs and smiles. "Why not?" he says. "The mouth is not made merely to spit with or curse with. At times it may be used for whistling, or even for kissing, *verdad?*"

The truth about women and womanhood is for most Mormons apparently much simpler and less poignant than Stegner's essays would have us believe. Ann Terry, Marilyn Slaght-Griffin and Elizabeth Terry, *Mormons and Women* (Santa Barbara: Butterfly Publishing Inc., 1980, 143 pp, index, biblio., \$4.95), suggest that since the Church is true, nothing else matters, including such piddling details as this: In female-headed households, the poverty rate runs some seven times higher than in male-headed households; 61.4 percent of children under six who live in female-headed households in the United States (money income, 1974) are in poverty. The insipidity and narrowness of this little paperback comes forth best in a chapter entitled "Can a Good Mormon Be Pro-ERA?" Here, our authors argue that even though the brethren have not ordered court action for those who support the proposed amendment, anyone who violates counsel and works for its passage has effectively rejected the Prophet. "God has said that his ways are not man's ways," they say, so the duty of the true Saint is to forget social issues that do not mesh with the doings of the Church. The insensitivity of such reasoning boggles the mind. Since when are hungry children not God's business?

The Terrys have no monopoly, by any means, on the Mormon book market when it comes to its appetite for melodrama about women. Jack Weyland, *Charly: A Novel* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1980, 98 pp., \$6.95), presents a rip-off of Erich Segal's *Love Story* in which boy meets girl, girl dies. The

twist is that instead of Harvard and Boston, the setting is BYU and Provo, and instead of the girl cussing like a stevedore, she says stuff like "special" and "share" all the time. Charly is actually beautiful but tom-boyish Charlene who meets Sam (a handsome BYU computer science major) and leads him around with her charms like a bull on a nose chain. Sam tames Charly only to lose her to demon death. The stereotypes are complete in this novel, so complete that anyone seeking to know the "ideal" young Mormon male and female need only read *Charly*. And the old song said that "They're all made out of ticky-tacky, and they all look just the same."

Current novels (mostly disgusting) aimed at Mormon readers universally tend to perpetuate through stereotype the traditional LDS position that woman's place is in the home and that anything that takes her away from it is a threat to the nuclear family and hence to civilization. This also is essentially the thrust of Oscar W. McConkie's polemic, *She Shall Be Called Woman* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979, 136 pp., index, \$5.50). McConkie argues that when it comes to the essential choices in life, a woman must realize that her biological position as childbearer and nurturer requires that she eschew many possible roles in the public domain in order to be the proverbial "wife and mother." The thing about this shopworn diatribe is its stubborn neglect of reality. Increasingly, women find themselves in marital (or nonmarital) situations that hardly fit the Relief Society ideal—divorce, the empty nest, boredom and wasted potential create enormous frustrations in the lives of so many Mormon women that the McConkie argument becomes nothing more than rather silly. Even such popular tripe as Daryl V. Hoole's *Our Own Society* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979, 81 pp. illus., \$4.50), fails to recognize that all Mormon women simply do not and cannot fit into any sweet-mama role, despite its effort to confront the famous Mormon Mother Syndrome with soothing words. Hoole seems to think that there definitely are problems with assuming that Mormon women are all just like she is, a happily married Bountiful homemaker with a quiver full

of kids, a perfect hairdo, a ruffled dress and a sweet smile. But she sings her lyrics to a tired tune—Relief Society gives a Mormon lady all the outside activity she needs or has time for. Amazing.

So we turn in frustration from novels and apologetics to biographical materials in order to see what the lives of Mormon women in the flesh can tell us. Mary Frances Sturlaugson, *A Soul So Rebellious* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1981, 88 pp., \$5.95), presents an autobiography of a Mormon who is not only female but black as well. Despite something of a scandal that developed around the book when Sturlaugson's ghostwriter sued her for failing to give him credit or money for his efforts, the book remains a hot item on LDS book lists. The novelty of a black woman serving a mission for the Church and then bearing her testimony in print has piqued the curiosity of Mormon readers, although the story itself reveals little of her journey into the gospel that these readers could not have guessed ahead of time—her youth in the "ghetto" of Chattanooga, Tennessee, her education and subsequent job, her confrontation with the missionaries, her decision for baptism and a mission. The predictability of what she says, however, does not equal the frustration the reader experiences when the book provides virtually no meaningful insights into the questions surrounding the plight of either minorities or women in the Church.

But then, Elaine Cannon is really the type of Mormon every LDS woman wants to be. Reading her latest, *The Seasoning* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1981, 70 pp. \$4.95), the reader becomes convinced that the unusual is meaningless and the commonplace blessed as Cannon recites her memories of the various times of the year. Cannon comes across as so nauseatingly normal in *The Seasoning* that the book reads like a fairy story. And that seems to be the continuing trouble in all this literature about and by Mormon women: What is normal, anyhow? And is that norm consistent with reality? Maybe there just is no such thing as a normal Mormon woman. Maybe there need to be all kinds of niches for Mormon women to fill. But is that not what the feminists among us have been saying all along?

AMONG THE MORMONS

A Survey of Current Literature

STEPHEN W. STATHIS

THE VAST MAJORITY of the books considered in the accompanying compilation are of a biographical, fictional, doctrinal or inspirational nature. While the biographies and works on local history are generally intended for a rather limited audience, the remaining works all too frequently are written because they will sell rather than for what insight they might convey.

Peter Bart's *Thy Kingdom Come*, "the first novel that has ever pierced the Zion Curtain" (in one reviewer's opinion), is by far the most provocative and dramatic of the works included: "Skeleton after skeleton is hauled out of the closet, from the status of women to polygamous cults."

Far more useful is Lawrence Foster's *Religion and Sexuality*, one of two studies on the Shakers, the Mormons and the Oneida Community published recently. Stanley B. Kimball's study of *Heber C. Kimball*, and Klaus J. Hansen's *Mormonism and the American Experience*, also have captured considerable attention.

Of greatest potential significance to Mormons is the Ehat and Cook annotated compendium of *The Words of Joseph Smith* that provides a historically rigorous alternative to much of Joseph Fielding Smith's *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*.

Linda Thatcher's bibliography of recent dissertations and theses reflects a continued willingness on the part of our institutions of higher learning to encourage scholarly inquiry, despite the reality that much of what is produced will be read by only a handful.

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A Selected Bibliography of Recent Books on Mormons and Mormonism

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LINDA THATCHER is a librarian with the Utah Historical Society.

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