

LETTERS

“When They Are Learned”

I found R. Jan Stout’s essay on the psychobiological approach to the study of homosexuality (Summer 1987) incongruous and disturbing.

The incongruity lies in the author’s overconfidence in his own theories even though he acknowledges that psychiatrists, including himself, have consistently been compelled to repudiate precepts they once considered inviolate. Ironically, he begins his paper by recounting how he once felt “satisfied, confident, and correct” about a particular psychological theory only to realize sixteen years later that his views were “wrong and simplistic” (p. 29). He does not appear to have learned much from that experience.

Stout acknowledges that Freud’s theories, once regarded as established truth in the psychiatric world, are now called into question. Yet he asserts that the theories espoused by his “new psychobiology” have been “demonstrated” (p. 30). Why is “new psychobiology” inherently more provable or reliable than “old” psychobiology, or Freudianism, or any other manmade doctrine?

I was disturbed by Stout’s eagerness to exalt the opinions of a few men—opinions about which he admitted there is no consensus—above the unanimous expressions of revealed truth through the prophets. He does not suggest that tolerance of homosexual conduct might somehow be reconcilable with the words of the prophets. He simply assumes that the prophets are wrong.

Stout has chosen to reject the certain voice of revealed truth in favor of competing opinions and theories about which, he

admits, “no consensus exists” (p. 30), even though “we are in the process of trying to separate fact from fiction” (p. 31). Not even the American Psychiatric Association can decide what it thinks about homosexuality. Inexplicably, Stout appears to *prefer* being “carried about by every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14).

As for the Church’s unambiguous teaching that homosexuality is contrary to human nature and the will of God, Stout asks, rhetorically: “Does the revealed word of God in the scriptures supersede the experience and reality of millions of homosexual individuals?” (p. 37) (as if scriptures were not based on “experience and reality”). Stout leaves little doubt how he would answer the question. He asserts: “*Clearly*, there is no easy solution to these most intimate of human circumstances” (p. 37, emphasis added), and “*clearly*, pursuing an extreme position is pointless” (p. 40, emphasis added).

Stout seems to use words such as “clearly,” not when his argument is in fact clear, but when he seeks acceptance of a premise for which he can cite no support. He does not even attempt to justify his wholesale rejection of the words of the prophets; he simply takes it for granted that their pronouncements are entitled to no credence. He would have us disregard the Church’s “extreme” (p. 40) and “simplistic” (p. 37) teachings on homosexuality despite his admission that neither he nor the other “experts” are capable of proving them wrong. He simply states: “I do not know the answers, and I suspect that no one among us does” (p. 40). Jacob’s lament in 2 Nephi 9:28 has never been more applicable: “O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When

they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not."

What is Stout's paper doing in a journal that purports on its logo page to "express Mormon culture" and to "foster . . . scholarly achievement based on [Mormon] cultural heritage"? What is "Mormon" about flatly rejecting the words of the prophets? What is "scholarly" about arguing that it is unjust to expect homosexuals to refrain from consummating their urges because those urges may have biological roots? What urges do not? Carried to its logical extreme, this argument means that single heterosexuals should not be expected not to fornicate, that pedophiles should not be expected to refrain from molesting children, etc. Stout has been seduced into believing that homosexual acts are unique among abominations and are not immoral because those who commit them can't help it. By such a standard, no one could be expected to exercise self-control.

Stout also implies that AIDS cannot be the natural consequence of committing unnatural acts since "innocent children, hemophiliacs, and others [have] contracted the disease" (p. 35). Newborn infants inherit venereal diseases and drug addiction from their mothers, but that does not prove that venereal diseases and drug addiction are not consequences of immorality.

DIALOGUE does not advance its avowed purpose, as expressed on the logo page of each issue, by publishing articles such as Stout's. It seems to me that something more than just a controversial point of view should be required to merit publication in your journal.

Kurtis J. Kearl
Petaluma, California

Stout Responds

Eugene England is a thoughtful and eloquent person and I appreciate his letter

(Fall 1987). He sees the dilemma and encourages us to react with empathy and understanding to the plight of the homosexual. Yet he attributes to me an argument that I do not espouse nor make in my essay — namely that there is essentially no difference between sexual feelings and behavior for the homosexual.

I asked a rhetorical question of the reader regarding sexual feelings, behavior, and sin. My very next question (which England chose to ignore) asks, "And, if homosexuals do not act on these sexual feelings, have they morally transgressed?" (p. 37). Indeed, I pointed out *the* moral choice that a Mormon homosexual must face to remain active, loyal and guilt-free and accepted — is to "remain celibate and abstain from engaging in eroticism with a member of one's own sex" (p. 39). As a clinical psychiatrist I am constantly dealing with the distinction between feelings and behavior, and the homosexual patients that I have seen over twenty-two years of practice have been struggling with this conflict since the earliest awakening of their sexuality.

The purpose of my essay was to inform the reader about new advances in psychobiology and the complexity that this presents in understanding the development of human sexuality. It was not to state an "argument" which England erroneously attributes to me. He seems to feel that if a therapist does not *condemn* sexual expression for the homosexual, that inevitably this implies *condoning* of the behavior. Defining sin and imposing moral judgment is not the task of a psychotherapist. My patients are universally aware of their moral conflict and the sin they feel, both in fantasy and behavior. Most of them have counseled with religious leaders long before seeing me or any other therapist. I was saddened to read England's conclusions that somehow this essay encouraged expression of homosexual feelings. It did not. Nor do I take that position in any therapeutic encounter.

My entire professional life is focused on dealing with psychic and emotional pain. I do agree that we all have "crosses to bear," but I would be very reluctant to compare or quantify mine or anyone's with another human being. Asserting that "I hurt as much or more than you do" seems to me to be the very antithesis of empathy.

Inevitably, an essay such as mine will confuse some and enlighten others. These issues expose the existential dilemmas and spiritual struggles we must face in our humanity. In the closing paragraph, I acknowledged that I did not know the ultimate moral and theological answers. Perhaps England's discussion of pre- and post-mortal life will also confuse some and enlighten others.

Kurtis J. Kearn's letter is a diffuse, misleading, and irrational attack against me, the psychiatric profession, the scientific method, homosexuals, and *DIALOGUE*. A major complaint seems to center on my willingness to examine a new body of knowledge regarding the development of human sexuality. This is an alternative explanation to previously held theories which do not hold up under more rigorous scientific scrutiny.

Science is not a static, inviolate system, nor is it a comfortable place for insular and calcified minds. Rather, it relies on constant revision, flexibility in thought, and attention to the implications of new data. I acknowledged that "more difficult research is needed, but the evidence accumulated over the past two decades for the biological causality of sexual and gender identity, although inconclusive, is persuasive" (p. 34). Kearn sees that as "overconfidence" and being "carried about by every wind of doctrine." Perhaps he would prefer that we still view epilepsy and schizophrenia as forms of demonic possession?

In his diatribe, Kearn attributes attacks on the prophets and Church to me which are purely his own distortions. He calls the Church's teachings on homosexuality "extreme" and "simplistic" and then tries to

pass those words on as quotes from my essay. They are not. He falsely accuses me of advocating that homosexuals consummate their sexual urges, when, in fact, I only present the moral dilemma they must confront. Kearn succeeds in thoroughly discrediting himself by launching into an attack on *DIALOGUE* for publishing such articles. I, among many, am grateful to this journal for providing the forum for controversial articles as well as for printing letters in response.

R. Jan Stout
Salt Lake City, Utah

Not Alone

Enclosed find a check for renewal of my subscription and for two gift subscriptions. The discovery of *DIALOGUE* was for me like finding I wasn't alone in a world of grayness after all.

Three of my favorite articles during the past year were those by Lavina Fielding Anderson, Eugene England, and Robert A. Rees. It is so important for us to share our thoughts and to listen to each other — to carry on the sacred sacrament of intertwining souls. Thank you for being there.

Ronald C. Ellis
Mancos, Colorado

In Celebration of Contradictions

Thank you for publishing Dave Grandy's *Of Quiffs, Quarks, and God* (Winter 1986).

I'm surprised Grandy did not include in his bibliography Fritjof Capra's *The Tao of Physics* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975), excellent discussion for the lay reader of analogies between subatomic physics and eastern mysticism.

The behavior of subatomic particles sounds more and more like Joseph Smith's refined matter. At least, that thought opens the door for this unregenerate naturalist.

Perhaps our concerns for a severe logical consistency in Mormon history and doctrine involve an inability to perceive reality as, to borrow Churchill's phrase, "a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma."

Two experts, equally intelligent and informed, often disagree. One of them may know the value exactly (mass?) but miss the context (velocity?). The other may know, objectively, its position in "reality," but be unaware of the weight of moral implications. We all seem to see things best from private perspectives that block out other viewpoints, unaware of the relativity of all human perception.

I accept the fact I often hold opposing ideas simultaneously. My poem, "Memory's Duty" (DIALOGUE, Winter 1983), concludes my testimony as being "I don't believe what I believe." Since then I've moved into a new phase: "I believe what I don't believe," hoping the movement is toward that happiest of positions, "I believe what I believe."

A recent book, *Vital Lies, Simple Truths: The Psychology of Self-Deception*, by Daniel Goleman (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), shows the rational mind blundering amidst inconsistencies of good intentions—very helpful for any Mormon getting ulcers over the latest infractions against common sense.

Studies in left brain/right brain thinking are also very helpful. Julian Jaynes's *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982) is a far-out but fascinating theory, especially for someone inclined to poetic explanations.

Jerald and Sandra Tanner, pursuing a relentless defense of what they perceive to be rational consistency, wield only one worn-out weapon in their attack upon Mormonism: *contradiction*. Our response, so far, has been a kind of stunned silence or anonymous muttering: (Who, us? The Mormons? Inconsistent?) That, or an over-reaction against purveyors of rationality, i.e., intellectuals. Anyone who reveals Mormon contradictions *must* be of the

devil, e.g., those bomb-throwing Mormon historians.

Whether it's the Tanners' simplistic view of consistency (sequence) as the single test of truth—a position made ludicrous by Hume two hundred years ago—or by Church bureaucrats in their shining armour of brittle, inflexible reaction—the anti-intellectual as virtue incarnate—somehow we need to find the middle path of sanity.

The time is long overdue to acknowledge the real glory of our history, a story not of perfection achieved (the theme of our brochures), but of a continuing and unquenchable desire for perfection in a real world of terror, failure, conflict, and inescapable bodily death—a vision of possibility amidst the mortality. No one needs to lie in Joseph Smith's defense, only to tell the whole truth. His complexities, inconsistencies, and contradictions will never be told in an atmosphere of timid acquiescence.

I believe the "Dialogue Mormon"—the person who sees and understands various and differing perspectives in an ongoing search for truth—will rise to the defense of the gospel in a world becoming violently factional and reactionary, where narrow pockets of private bias resemble terrorist camps sending out attack squads against anyone who disagrees with the latest party line.

Grandy's essay was most welcome and helpful in the continuing effort to maintain that fine balance between left-brain skepticism and right-brain faith.

Ronald Wilcox
Grand Prairie, Texas

Dialogue It Is Not

I am discouraged that DIALOGUE would choose to publish "The Third Nephite" by Levi S. Peterson (Winter 1987). I am even more disappointed that it should be awarded a prize. While I lack credentials as a secular critic of fiction, I offer several observations on the story from the vantage

of one committed to the principles behind *DIALOGUE*.

First: It is fiction. Any resemblance between Simpson and disciples of the Savior as reported in 3 Nephi is remote indeed.

Second: It is offensive. Fundamentalists, believers in the verity of the mission of the Three Nephites, and people of good taste will all be offended.

Third: It is not dialogue. The disrespect evident in this story is unbecoming to the purpose of *DIALOGUE* and can only add fuel to those who view *DIALOGUE* as dangerous and unvirtuous.

Surely the editors of *DIALOGUE* should have exercised better judgment than to publish this story and hopefully will do so in the future.

Joseph B. Romney
Rexburg, Idaho

Peterson Responds

I am sorry that my story, "The Third Nephite" (Winter 1986), has offended some readers. I would feel especially bad if they cancelled their subscriptions. *DIALOGUE* is a good cause and every subscription helps.

My piece is a fiction, not a sermon or a theological treatise. I hoped it would seem funny. Comedy almost always exaggerates and distorts reality. So, of course, Simpson, my third Nephite, is an unlikely representative of the Almighty. I did not intend an insult to either God or the Book of Mormon. I did intend a spoof upon the sentimentalized, mythicized stories about the Three Nephites which once were very common among Mormons and even now occur on occasion. Simpson solemnly declares that the rafters of the St. George temple are held together only by the magnetic power of the priesthood. I hear things almost as preposterous in high priests' meeting on the average of once a month.

Doctrine and Covenants 59:15 instructs us that much laughter is sin. Since the Church from time to time legitimately re-

vises the scriptures, I sincerely hope it will someday expunge this unfortunate invitation to a grim sobriety. I pity people who can't shake their insides by hearty laughter.

I strongly resist the idea that reverence consists of rigid facial muscles and silence. Reverence is an emotion, not a physical condition. It can exist in the wildest uproar. I know that because I have felt unfathomably reverent beside a plunging mountain torrent.

During the prelude to sacrament meeting each Sunday in my ward, a "reverence child" stands at the pulpit to set an example. I thank God for those precious occasions when that child defies the unsmiling men on the row behind him, leans his (or her) chest on the podium, puts a finger in his ear, fidgets with the microphone, and waves at his mother. God isn't offended by movement and noise. Why should we be?

I don't think my story will be an indictment against me at Judgment Day. I am not being altogether facetious when I say that I adhere to a theology of the emunctories. God created human beings with intestines, bladders, sweat glands, and nostrils, and he does not despise his handiwork.

God is too great to be vulnerable to impieties, profanities, and obscenities. He is too magnanimous to take offense at human pettiness. Above all, God is compassionate.

Theologians and preachers have given heaven to a moral elite. God will surprise them by also giving it to the adulterers, kleptomaniacs, alcoholics, and insane. The gospel is especially for sinners; they need it, yearn for it, own it.

When God works through people, he works through sinners. No others are available.

Truly, Simpson of my story is an improbable specimen of the Three Nephites. He lies, he is undignified, he is ugly. All the more reason that God would work a miracle through him.

Levi S. Peterson
Ogden, Utah

Absolutely Androcentric

Tim B. Heaton's article "Four Characteristics of the Mormon Family: Contemporary Research on Chastity, Conjugality, Children, and Chauvinism" (Summer 1987) proved readable, even fascinating, which is quite an accomplishment for an article reporting statistical survey results. I can see why he got a prize.

I was particularly impressed by the optimism of his more speculative conclusions, "Prospects for the Future." Heaton generalizes from his research: "Recent changes in family size, divorce, and female labor force participation have not been a result of ideological confrontation" (p. 111). Heaton also asserts that LDS theology is "remarkably flexible" (p. 111) and illustrates that flexibility with regard to the family by suggesting that parents of today's smaller families "still feel they are multiplying and replenishing the earth" and are not rejecting "the Church's theology of the family" when they limit family size for economic or emotional health reasons (p. 111).

Similarly, that divorce is allowed is cited as evidence that reality can be accommodated without rejecting the ideal of an eternal family (p. 112). The acceptance of mothers who work "as a means of supplementing family income or to use their talents" is taken as a sign that there is no worry about these women perhaps "usurping the provider role of the husband" (pp. 111-12).

On the basis of this evidence, Heaton suggests that there is a high likelihood of further change, including changes in the husband-wife relationship "without changing policies regarding the priesthood" (p. 112). He even hints at the possible future demise of patriarchy (man in charge of woman) within the current priesthood theology: "This same priesthood theology may some day be used to encourage egalitarian rather than authoritarian relationships" (p. 112).

I found myself unable to share this optimism in light of President Ezra Taft Benson's 22 February 1987 "Fireside for

Parents," a version of which was published as "To the Mothers in Zion," (pamphlet [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987]). I heard in President Benson's address the articulation of core values that contradicted Heaton's hopeful observations and forecasts point by point. For example, President Benson decries the curtailment of births for all reasons but the health of the mother (p. 4), decries divorce as an evil (p. 7), and places great emphasis on the need for mothers to leave the workplace and return home (pp. 6-8).

Heaton, I believe, overestimated the flexibility of the theology of the Mormon family. In his hopefulness, he thought that, since men and women are promised the same blessings in eternal marriage in Doctrine and Covenants 132:19, this suggests that "unity, interdependence, and joint priesthood rather than hierarchy and male dominance" within marriage is possible within the current theology (p. 109).

President Benson, on the other hand, reiterated the Mormon theology of the family, the vision of Mormon manhood/godhood, as it has been expounded since the 1840s, virtually unchanged. The continuity of this core theology was underscored by President Benson's use of quotations by Brigham Young, David O. McKay, and Spencer W. Kimball (pp. 4, 2, and 6-8, respectively). Heaton mistook, I believe, external changes in the size and appearance of the family for changes in the core theology. That unshifting core theology may be elucidated from President Benson's address.

President Benson cited Doctrine and Covenants 132:63: "The Lord states that the opportunity and responsibility of wives is 'to multiply and replenish the earth, according to my commandment, and to fulfill the promise that was given by my father before the foundation of the world, and for their exaltation in the eternal worlds, that they may bear the souls of men; for herein is the work of my Father continued, that he may be glorified'" (p. 3).

The heart of the Mormon theology of the family, therefore, is the glorification of men by the reproductive ability of their wives. The subject of the original sentence, not included in the quotation, is "they," which in turn refers to "one or either [sic] of the ten virgins" who had in the previous verse been "given unto him ["any man"—v. 61] by this law." In short, this verse is talking about plural wives. Thus, plurality was instituted to aid the multiplication of a man, and it is the principle of plurality that will exalt plurally married women, making them eternally able to bear "men" and thereby bring glory to the Father.

Even if one ignores the context of plurality, as President Benson does, this scripture still states that childbearing exalts women and that exalted women will be able to bear the "souls of men" in eternity, bringing glory to the Father. Either with or without reference to plurality, woman's eternal value is as a reproducer of man; and Eternal Man, or God, is glorified by the extent or the quantity of his offspring.

This, then, is the core theology of the eternal family. It is a vision of the male God, governing and directing his (part of the) universe, which his dependent and obedient assistant, who reproduces him and trains his children until they are mature enough to be tested by him on a world such as this one.

It is this core theology of man becoming God and woman remaining his assistant that causes grown men to say in the name of the Lord: "Her place is in the home, to build the home into a heaven of delight" (p. 7), and "Two spouses working . . . creates an independence which is not cooperative, [and] causes distortion" (p. 7). These statements are sentimental mottos and not coherent statements about the nature and needs of women, men, and children.

This sentimentality becomes painfully obvious when President Benson quotes a son's tribute to his mother towards the end of his talk:

"I don't remember much about her views of voting nor her social prestige; and

what her ideas on child training, diet, and eugenics were, I cannot recall. The main thing that sifts back to me now through the undergrowth of years is that she loved me. . . . Of all the sensations pleasurable to my life nothing can compare with the rapture of crawling up into her lap and going to sleep. . . . Thinking of this, I wonder if the woman of today, with all her tremendous notions and plans, realizes what an almighty factor she is in shaping of her child for weal or woe'" (p. 12).

For an adult male to utter these words is to admit he never knew or appreciated his mother as an adult human being. He never saw her as a source of wisdom or counsel regarding his functioning in the world. Her opinions were nonexistent or unmemorable. He remembers only the lap of security.

To quote this individual who never learned that his mother was, like himself, an insecure and inquisitive human being, is to reveal that the speaker also has not learned to see women as human beings with goals and needs and aspirations and insecurities. Is it not disturbing to find an adult man disturbed that all women are not a faceless refuge of God-like serenity? It is only from such a perspective that a person can put forth the notion that a home should be or should be able to become "a heaven of delight," if only the mother is always in it.

Perhaps President Benson and those who share his views believe that God's wife perpetually sacrifices herself to her eternal husband and his offspring and that righteous mortal women will share the same destiny. If so, then it is understandable why the most official message to women must always urge limitation and restraint. If woman were to follow her nature, unrestrained by men who represent God's will to her, she may become unfit for her eternal duties by competing with men, thus detracting from her husband's manliness and thereby "distorting" it.

As President Benson said: "In the eternal family, God established that fathers

are to preside in the home.” Aspects of presiding are: “to provide, to love, to teach, and to direct” (p. 2). Since these remarks are about the eternities, when man shall be as God and woman shall continue to assist and reproduce, here is the true theology of the Mormon family. This address by President Benson reminds us that gender roles on earth imitate the eternal family which is our origin and our destiny. God is the head of his home while his wife or wives constitute the heart. Woman makes home a heaven for man on earth because so it is in heaven. Sacrificing to have children here earns rewards hereafter and brings glory to the father (and his Father) — just as God told Emma in Doctrine and Covenants 25:14 to “let thy soul delight in thy husband, and the glory that shall come upon *him*” (italics added).

It seems almost as if Mormon theology is the product of men who never came to know women, but whose entire experience with women consisted of being nurtured, served, pleased, and assisted by women who revered them as their gods to be.

This vision of men and by men suggests that if the woman trespasses upon the man’s role, she distorts the clear division of labor as God intends and exemplifies it. Hence, independence in a woman disturbs cooperation, or the divine order of dominance implied in the man’s duty to imitate God and preside and direct.

Heaton’s positive and hopeful views regarding the flexibility of the Mormon theology of the family are brought up short by President Benson’s address. It is President Benson who accurately portrays the LDS theology of the family, however. Heaton’s use of Doctrine and Covenants 132:19, for example, to suggest that an egalitarian model of the husband-wife relationship is possible under the present priesthood paradigm ignores the latter part of that revelation wherein woman’s eternal value is as reproductive device (D&C 132:63).

She is classed as part of “things” in verse 53; listed as a possession among “houses and lands, wives and children” in

verse 55; regarded as property that may be collected as a man desires as long as she doesn’t belong to anyone else (“they are given unto him; for he cannot commit adultery with *that* that belongeth unto him and to no one else”) in verse 61; becomes her husband’s means for multiplying and replenishing the earth in verse 63; and is once again one of the “*things*” God will “*give*” him in verse 65.

Women are not things. Yet has not this type of reification taken place in the mind of one who utters: “No career approaches in importance that of wife, homemaker, mother” and who then defines these roles as “cooking meals, washing dishes, making beds for one’s precious husband and children” (p. 7)? A wife, homemaker, and mother has been reduced to a list of chores that anyone — man, woman, or older child — could perform.

There is no difference between the human needs and aspirations of adult men and women. Yes, there are biological differences. But to ask a woman to base her self-definition on and find fulfillment in doing menial labor for her husband and children shows a terrifying blindness on the part of the one making the request. He seems unaware that women are complete, utter, and full-fledged human beings like himself, and that their humanity is also precious. This is particularly terrifying when the one making the request is speaking in behalf of God.

The theological implications of a quote such as: “Come home, wives, to your husbands. Make home a heaven for them” (p. 7) are shown when later (p. 8), after a similar plea to come home and be a mother, the statement is made: “Then you have achieved your accomplishment supreme, without peer, and you will be the envy of all through time and eternity.” This implies that in sacrificing herself for husband and offspring, she prepares for her eternal reward which, as we have seen, is more of the same.

After repeatedly assuring the women that these calls to limit themselves are from

God (see pp. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, esp. 8, and 11), President Benson states: "Your God-given roles are so vital to your own exaltation and to the salvation and exaltation of your children" (p. 8). The implications are clear: Ignoring this advice will imperil her eternal reward and the eternal rewards of present (or potential, see p. 4) members of her family.

If I were to receive such counsel, I would feel not only warned but threatened. I would wonder if the men giving me such a message or the God in whose name they speak are threatened by an individual who claimed to be fully human, who had needs and aspirations beyond present and eternal self-sacrifice in the service of their Lord and the biological imperative that he enforces.

In fact, I believe it is so, especially since the God for whom these men speak has on one occasion uttered such a threat. Doctrine and Covenants 132:64 gives a very disturbing example of God threatening wives who refuse to give their husband permission to marry plurally: "I say unto you, if any man have a wife, who holds the keys of this power, and he teaches unto her the law of my priesthood, as pertaining to these things, then shall she believe and administer unto him, or she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord your God; for I will destroy her." Men may also be threatened, as with punishments for transgressions, but such intense personal involvement by God is most unusual. And the threat is here directed to women who are already exemplary saints by virtue of their eligibility for participation in this "new and everlasting covenant" (D&C 132:4).

God's universe is absolutely androcentric, according to these men who speak in the name of God. According to them, eternal man is to be as God hereafter, while eternal woman just keeps on being generic woman, valued for the offspring and pleasure she brings her man. To prepare her for her eternal role, a continual effort is made to limit her spiritual, social, and economic powers.

When I see the difference between my eternal promises and my daughters' prospects for the eternities, an appropriate response could either be to thank God that I was born male or to curse God for creating woman with the strengths, powers, and aspirations of human beings but without the right or opportunity to develop and employ them. At every turn men must magnify and women must limit.

Heaton concludes that "working women, reconstituted families, and singles are each growing segments of the Church membership that do not fit well within the existing structure" but that "the reorientation of sex roles will continue within the Church" (p. 112). He also adds that "unwillingness to change may be more detrimental in the long run than open acceptance of change" and that such change is "a means to preserve the core values by alleviating existing stresses and strains."

He cites the discontinuance of polygamy as the archetypical successful change. This suspension operates only in this life, however, and does not directly confront the core values of the patriarchal order. But it is precisely the patriarchal order, the divine order, the definition of who God is, that is *the* core value of the LDS theology of the family, and this core value is directly confronted by changes that would change the dependent status of women.

Heaton is of the opinion that "attempts to induce change through direct confrontation with the core ideology of the Mormon family will fall on deaf ears" (p. 112). This is probably true, but poses a dilemma. In my opinion, whether a woman should work or determine the frequency of her pregnancies is morally trivial compared to the assertion that woman is not fully human — an assertion which lies at the heart of the Mormon theology of the family and is part of the Mormon definition of the nature of God. Although "they [man and wife] shall be gods" according to Doctrine and Covenants 132:20, he shall be God and she shall be his wife, not God. She will not be known by or accessible to

her own children while they are being tried by her husband, and many will fail to ever come back into her presence. It seems to me that a woman's greatest fear could well be that the Mormon doctrine of the family is indeed the true reflection of how the universe works.

Abraham Van Luik
Richland, Washington

The Church Mission Abroad

I hardly know what to make of Garth Jones's essay on the international mission of the Church (Summer 1987). His title suggests spiritual aspects of Church expansion abroad, but his paper for the most part is dedicated to such temporal concerns as poverty, hunger, housing, and how long and to what extent North American Saints might be willing to subsidize their Third World brothers and sisters.

Is this essay suggesting that socio-technocrats should take over because the brethren are too parochial to know which policies will meet the "new" challenges of international Mormonism?

The long, successful history of Church growth "in strange lands" argues against tinkering with what is working well. None of the challenges are really new anyway. Initiated among the American Indians (Lamanites), missionary work moved successively to Canada, the Eastern states, and Great Britain. For over a generation, the restored gospel has had both a presence and a measured growth in such nonwestern countries as Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan, not to mention the western-oriented third world Latin American countries where beginnings were modest but recent growth impressive. Nevertheless, success should not be defined by numbers of converts. The gospel is to be preached "to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people." That does not mean that everyone or even most will be baptized.

Early in this dispensation the brethren preached that the gospel was destined to fill the whole earth. Church leadership has, down to the present, presided well over the modest, logical, measured, and successful growth of the Church.

Now, if the Church has long understood its international mission and has been successful in dealing with the challenges thereof, it is hard for me to understand why Jones calls for the gospel to be custom-tailored and adapted to appeal to non-western cultures by "enlarging the Mormon vision of Christian ethics" (p. 68) — whatever that means. It should be axiomatic that gospel principles do not change or need to be modified. The gospel of Jesus Christ will elevate every soul who embraces it with all his heart — whether Jew, gentile, Buddhist, Hindu, or Moslem.

It is true that the international expansion of the Church has been subsidized generously by North American Saints, but why not? The resources of the Church are well known to the brethren, and there is every reason to expect that inspired, prudent stewardship will continue to serve the "international church" as well in the future as it has in the past. "For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare" (D&C 104:17).

The Church, indeed, should thank Garth Jones and many others like him for introducing the gospel in many parts of the world. Experience shows that great things can come from modest beginnings. Fancy buildings and a full church program are not essential for meaningful worship. I am surprised that Jones feels, therefore, that the Pakistani convert has "no future at home . . . unless he has a network of support" (pp. 64–65).

I have to agree with Jones on one point, however. The architectural statement of LDS temples built around the world in recent years leaves much to be desired.

Kenneth W. Taylor
Burbank, California

Jones Responds

I appreciate Kenneth W. Taylor's comments but suspect that we would give very different answers to the three perplexing questions I posed in my article. While gospel principles may be immutable truth, their interpretation and practice certainly are not. Nor do I see the Church's growth abroad as logical and orderly. Perhaps we are speaking out of drastically different world experiences.

My life spans the Great Depression, World War II, and the post-war hopes, successes, and frustrations. I have experienced personal poverty and have consequently spent much of my adult life attempting to alleviate poverty. Since I am a cultural product of Wasatch-front Mormonism, it has been my context for trying to come to terms with the terrible waste of human life which I have witnessed. I have literal nightmares from some of these experiences.

I accept the thinking of the remarkable Jewish theologian Martin Buber, who stressed that human experience without religion is "but dust and ashes."¹ Yet nothing so tests my faith as Taylor's quotation: "For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare. . ." (D&C 104:17). Mainly under the auspices of the United Nations, I spent three years of my professional life in the early 1970s working on the world population problem. I was finally forced to admit that nothing I could foresee would curtail the "killing fields." This was one of the principal reasons I moved to Alaska where the population is small and the air is pure.

Nevertheless, I still consult from time to time with various U.S. and international agencies on population matters. In 1980, under a World Bank project in Indonesia, I did the organizational and system design to relocate two and a half million poverty-

stricken persons living on the islands of Java, Bali, and Madura. Over three million persons are born on these three islands each year. Over half die before age five. I realized that the project was somewhat fruitless but felt anyway that maybe a few hundred thousand lives would be better off. That was worth something.

Interestingly enough, I received another letter after the article was published. It came from an agnostic friend of Lutheran background:

"It is amazing that we have remained such close friends over the years when our religious beliefs so differ. I see no reason why your church can influence in any way whatsoever the dismal global future. I see no hope until (1) world population is brought under control (and your people are great offenders since they procreate beyond a reasonable level), (2) military expenditures are brought under control (and your Utah certainly benefits from them), and (3) Americans cut back their excessive consumption (remember I learned from you that each U.S. child consumes thirty-two times as much as each Indian child).

"Do not feel too bad about my assertions. Organized religions have nothing to offer the world [either] in the eradication of mass poverty [or in] setting [the] stage for massive social uplift."

Thus, I stand accused simultaneously of both optimism and pessimism. I feel both. My direct ancestors greatly benefitted from nineteenth-century Mormonism. But I worry about the future of Indonesian Saints I know living in the slums of Indonesia. Mormonism's first Indonesian convert now has Catholic leanings, and I feel he has embraced that church. The Pakistani convert who Taylor seems to feel has a fine future can, under Islamic law, be stoned to death and is completely rejected by his extended family.

Yet I must continue to live a religious life. Without belief, all life becomes senseless, even though my Mormon heritage does not provide a satisfying answer to the out-

¹ In Walter Kaufman, *Religion in Four Dimensions: Existential, Aesthetic, Historical, Comparative* (New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1976), p. 14.

rage of needless human suffering and premature death. So I try to live by the maxim, "Live simply so that others may simply live."

I wish my church was more involved in temporal salvation. It isn't. So I will continue to support—and at times work within—such religious organizations as Catholic Charities and the Salvation Army, both of which give me great spiritual sustenance and comfort. It is from such religious activities I gain the will to join secular efforts of human uplift like the U.S./Agency for International Development, special undertakings of the United Nations' family of agencies, and projects carried out by philanthropic associations.

Garth N. Jones
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In Response to "Obedience the Ambiguous Gift"

I am writing in response to Lavina Fielding Anderson's essay, "The Ambiguous Gift of Obedience" (Spring 1987). As either a gift or as ambiguous, I found this essay most stimulating.

Anderson asks the rhetorical questions, "Should we obey?" and "Is disobedience justified?" (p. 141). She answers both unequivocally "Of course," which suggests a high degree of ambiguity, but then continues by asking, "But whom? and what? and when?" I suspect that if she knew who or what we should obey, she would no longer find the principle of obedience ambiguous or need to ask when.

In my view, disobedience to authority does not per se make us disobedient. I doubt that Brigham Young considered himself disobedient because he refused to give up polygamy when ordered to do so by civil authority. If our obedience to some higher principle results in disobedience to some lower principle, in my view we are being obedient, not disobedient.

In addition, merely because an individual or organization claims that we owe

them obedience does not mean that we are disobedient in rejecting that claim. For example, I am not disobedient for refusing to follow a commandment of the Roman Catholic Church, whose claims I do not consider valid. But what if they were valid, and I was simply unable to believe them? Would I then be disobedient? I think not. At issue is not merely the validity of the claim, but also personal conscience. If I am obedient to the higher principle of personal conscience, then I am not disobedient for refusing to obey a person or organization that I do not believe in.

Further, even if I *know* a commandment is from God, in my view I am not disobedient if I refuse to follow it when it conflicts with my personal conscience. Was Peter disobedient when he refused to eat the unclean beast, although commanded to do so three times? (Acts 10:9-16) Was Nephi disobedient when he refused to kill Laban without first receiving a satisfactory (to him) explanation for why he should kill a helpless man? If he had not received that explanation, would he then have been disobedient for refusing to kill Laban? I think not.

It is interesting to me that Anderson never once mentions personal conscience in her essay. She does mention that in rendering obedience to another person "we must decide as individuals whether . . . [someone] . . . is telling the truth—God's truth, not just wishful thinking or self-deception" (pp. 137-38). But, she does not say that personal conscience plays any part in resolving these issues. The examples of Gideon, Zacharias, Abraham, and Jephthah (p. 137) spring easily to life in the essay with all of their ambiguity, but she overlooks Peter and Nephi.

I realize that personal conscience does not flourish in Mormon soil. I also realize that many who have been unable to be obedient to Church teachings because of personal conscience have not fared well. Some are no longer with us because of such issues as blacks not receiving the priesthood (which of course they now do), the

ERA, homosexuality, women not receiving the priesthood, writing on subjects unfavorable to the Church, etc. Most of us, while uneasy with the Church's actions (or inaction), merely wait patiently for the Church to do the right thing. But for some, personal conscience makes patience impossible.

In the Church I have never heard talks about personal conscience, about the risks of abdicating personal conscience to those in authority, about the dangers of Dachau, Jonestown, the Inquisition, My Lai, or Mountain Meadows. Juanita Brooks in *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962) suggests that there were dissenters at Mountain Meadows who fired their guns in the air (p. 74). How many lives would have been saved if only one man had stood up and said as did General Alexander W. Doniphan when ordered to shoot Joseph Smith, "It is cold-blooded murder. I will not obey your order. . . . if you execute these men, I will hold you responsible before an earthly tribunal, so help me God" (*Comprehensive History of the Church* 1:490.) Integrity does not count the personal cost; it is the ultimate value to which we owe our obedience, and all else must give way before it.

But don't we risk losing highly valued rewards or suffering greatly feared punishments if we do not obey those with the power to reward or punish us? We do, and if that is what we value most, then personal conscience will always come second. And what of the uncertainty introduced when each of us substitutes our own values for those of established authority? Unfortunately, evil done in the name of obedience frequently harms many and then passes for virtue. When individual conscience fails, there is not usually the opportunity to injure great numbers of others. (Unless, of course, that individual leads other individuals who will accept such a failure of conscience as morally correct.)

Obviously not everyone will see personal conscience as the highest value. And

even those who do will tend to suspect the motives of those who reach conclusions different from their own. At the same time, not everyone will agree that obedience to the "proper" authority is the higher value. What is the "proper" authority? Some may even decide that there is no absolute authority and each choice should be based upon each unique circumstance. Frequently our choices are automatic, unexamined — little more than acquiescence to our cultural norms.

As for me and my house, I cannot do what I know to be evil to obtain a reward or to avoid a punishment. My integrity is more important to me than the possibility that my ultimate fate may be less glorious or pleasant than yours.

Anderson does not really address the larger issues of obedience, but rather the narrower issue of obedience to the Church. She does recognize the dangers of Mountain Meadows (p. 138) and acknowledges that the Church does not define the total sum of her religious experience (p. 141). She does not confuse serving the Church or "building the kingdom" with the "Gospel" or service to our fellow man and to God. She is trying to find constructive ways to deal with the tension of living in a community of imperfect people who have a conviction that they alone possess absolute truth. Obviously she loves the Church and is dedicated to it. This, of course, makes it more painful when the Church or its members fall short of the gospel challenge.

In that context, I think her essay is most thoughtful and constructive. We do not resent what we give freely and with love, and our gift edifies us. We often resent what we give out of duty or duress and are not edified. Anderson's consecrated or mature obedience certainly makes obedience to the Church a free gift given in love — one that will surely edify the giver.

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