

## LETTERS

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### *Eve's Place*

Janice Allred's excellent essay "Toward a Mormon Theology of God the Mother" in the summer 1994 issue is to be commended. It reflects considerable thought and much scriptural research. Reading it I was reminded of an equally scripture-laden private thesis done forty years ago by a respected LDS friend, concluding that the Holy Ghost is in fact Joseph Smith. Stimulating though it is, Allred's thesis will have to cope with several highly documented historical treatises and alternative interpretations of the very scriptures and statements from Joseph she employs, in my judgment: First, I trust it will not be received as male chauvinism to cite Heber C. Kimball's identification of the Holy Ghost. On Sunday, 23 August 1857, President Kimball declared: ". . . let me tell you, the Holy Ghost is a man; he is one of the sons of our Father and our God; and he is that man that stood next to Jesus Christ just as I stand by brother Brigham" (*Journal of Discourses* 5:179).

Second, Allred's thesis must reconcile with the doctrine which, along with plural marriage, took Joseph Smith to Carthage: the plurality of gods, with all that it implies regarding the Godhead scriptures she employs.

Third, it will have to deal with President Brigham Young's consistent fifty-two-year treatment of the Godhead. (See David John Buerger, "The Adam-God Doctrine," *Dialogue*, Spring 1982, for just one example.)

Fourth, it must not overlook the fact that the Christ-is-Jehovah doctrine was never taught in the church prior to Joseph F. Smith's presidency, which it can be suggested promoted it and commissioned James Talmage's subsequent Godhead treatment both

to dispel internal conflict and reduce the external heat the church would take were Brigham's thesis to have survived. (See Boyd Kirkland, "Elohim and Jehovah in Mormonism and the Bible," *Dialogue*, Spring 1986, for example.)

Finally, if one wants a deeply matriarchal explanation of the identity of God the Mother, they need look no further than the repeated treatments of Eliza Roxcy Snow (Smith), whose God-Mother thesis in her hymn "O My Father" was, she declared, taught by her first husband Joseph to the sisters in the Kirtland temple. (See Edward Tullidge, *Women of Mormondom*, 101-102, 175-200.) This "High Priestess of Mormondom" echoed her husband's and Brigham's treatment of our God-Mother, Eve, in numerous writings, including her "Ultimatum of Human Life" wherein she repeats her brother Lorenzo's *Destiny* thesis:

Life's ultimatum, unto those that live  
as saints of God, and all my powers receive;

is still the onward upward course to tread—

To stand as Adam and as Eve, the head  
Of an inheritance, a new-form'd earth,  
And to their spirit-race, give mortal birth.

Give them experience in a world like this;

Then lead them forth to everlasting bliss,

Crowned with salvation and eternal joy

where full perfection dwells, without alloy

(*Poems Religious, Historical and Political*, by Eliza R. Snow, vol. 2 [1877]: 8-99).

Allred's thesis serves, if nothing else, to focus us on the much-ne-

glected corollary to President Brigham Young's controversial but declared revelations on the Godhead: our Mother in Heaven, Eve. (See *Journal of Discourses* 16:167; 13:145; 12:97; 8:208; *Millennial Star* 31:267; and L. John Nuttall *Journal*, 1:18-20.) Perhaps Tullidge did not misquote Eliza after all when he declared: "Joseph was gifted with wonderful memories of the 'eternities' past. He had not forgotten woman. He knew Eve, and he remembered Zion. He restored woman to her place among the Gods, where her primeval Genesis is written" (op. cit.).

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### *Looking in All the Wrong Places*

I would like to commend Janice Allred on her article, "Toward a Mormon Theology of God the Mother" (Summer 1994). Her painstaking research and careful writing is deeply appreciated. I would like to offer some alternative perspectives to the discussion she has initiated.

Allred states that any "re-examination of our doctrine must be firmly grounded in the scriptures." I disagree. There is no Mormon mandate that our doctrines be grounded in the scriptures, despite insistence to the contrary. Indeed, Allred herself clearly demonstrates that our doctrine of the nature of the Godhead is contradictory to what is taught in the Book of Mormon and most of the Doctrine and Covenants. Although our leaders have stated that the Book of Mormon is the most perfect book in the world, and that men (sic? maybe not) would get closer to God by studying its pre-

cepts than by any other, and that it is the keystone of our religion, the doctrine contained therein is unquestionably superseded by the content of the Doctrine and Covenants. The temple endowment is not based in the scriptures. Our doctrine of baptism for the dead is "supported" by one obscure verse in 2 Corinthians. If we can base a unique belief and practice on one small verse, why do we not follow all the teachings of the New Testament? Paul directed that women should not cut their hair (1 Cor. 11:15) and should be silent in church (1 Cor. 15:34). Although I am sure there are men who would like women to be silent in church, it is not official church policy (yet). By a vote, the church made the Word of Wisdom compulsory behavior instead of just good advice, in obvious contradiction to what is directly stated by the Lord in the revelation itself (D&C 89:2). The examples could occupy a paper in themselves, but I hope I have made my point. What Allred is doing is "proof-texting," and there will be many who will argue the points she tries to make.

Allred also admits that there are no direct references to God the Mother in our scriptures. Of course there are not! Our scriptures were written by men, about men, for men. As both Lynn Matthews Anderson has documented in her article, "Toward a Feminist Interpretation of Latter-day Scripture" (in the same issue), and Carol Lynn Pearson has discussed in her paper, "Could Feminism Have Saved the Nephites?" presented at the Sunstone Symposium in August 1993, the scriptures are not gender-inclusive at all. All of our canonized scriptures are male scriptures. Allred's article demonstrates that the search for God the Mother within the bound-

aries and writings of patriarchy is an exercise in futility. We cannot expect to find an affirmation of the feminine divine in scriptures that contain much material that degrades and dehumanizes women.

I feel much as Joseph did in the spring of 1820. We cannot settle the question of this doctrine by an appeal to the scriptures. But we can base our seeking, questioning, and quest on two solid, undeniable Mormon doctrines:

1) By simple reasoning, we can claim an acknowledgement of the existence of the Goddess through our doctrine of eternal marriage. If we are required to be sealed in marriage in order to attain godhood (D&C 132:20), and if "as man is, god once was, and as god is, man may become" (notice again the gender-exclusive language I am forced to quote), then the gods must be a married couple. Allred covers this ground thoroughly. Also, the doctrine of the existence of God the Mother has been recently reconfirmed by Gordon B. Hinckley, counselor in the First Presidency.

2) We can honor the search for God the Mother through our doctrine of continuing revelation, as well as our acknowledgement of "missing" scripture. Revelation, however, does not imply passivity on our part. On the contrary, to paraphrase an old Carol Lynn Pearson poem, when we stop receiving revelation, we can be fairly sure that the bad connection is on our side of the veil. Although it is the responsibility of the current First Presidency to receive revelation for the church as a whole, we are (or, at least, were in the church I grew up in) admonished to seek personal revelation in and for our own lives. I am deeply touched by the experience of

David Allred that is related in the article.

As Mormons, we recognize that nothing can be truly settled by an appeal to a closed canon of scripture, and as feminists, we recognize that we cannot look to patriarchy for answers on this issue. Although I applaud Allred's intent to attempt justification for God the Mother within acceptable Mormon dogma, I suggest she may be, as the country song says, "Lookin' for love in all the wrong places."

Since our current canon of scriptures is thoroughly androcentric, I believe women ought to begin collecting their own sacred writings. I would like to nominate David Allred's experience, the deeply moving dream of Erin Silva as related in his excellent article, "Matricidal Patriarchy: Some Thoughts Toward Understanding the Devaluation of Women in the Church" (same issue of *Dialogue*), the text of Carol Lynn Pearson's "Mother Wove the Morning," some of Margaret Toscano's writings, some of Lavina Fielding Anderson's writings, and some of Maxine Hanks's anthology, *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism* for consideration as sacred writings, just for beginners. I consider these people, along with Janice Allred and others, to be my spiritual leaders.

Thank you for a dynamite, deeply moving issue of *Dialogue*. Please keep up the good work.

Cindy Le Fevre  
Antelope, California

### *Checks and Balances*

I am not a scholar, intellectual, or writer. I am, though, a member who

consumes the *Ensign*, *Church News*, *Dialogue*, *Sunstone*, *Exponent II*, the *Mormon Women's Forum Newsletter*, and many other publications, including those written to discredit the veracity of the Restoration. By doing so, I expose myself to all issues, thus developing a balanced and personal appraisal of the church and everything associated with it.

I have always been fascinated by the diversity of ideas within and about the church. What I wish would be "simple truth" for all becomes individual truth for some. But then, it wouldn't be natural if we all accepted things as they are. There will always be a diversity of opinion about God, the Restoration, and the church.

I have read with great interest the activity and comments of those involved with or affected by "the purge of September 1993" and find the process and results fascinating. With everything stated, I remained neutral toward the church and those involved.

But then I read Lavina Fielding Anderson's "Freedom of Conscience: A Personal Statement" (*Dialogue*, Winter 1993) and find myself changing my neutrality to one of pity for her and the others. In fact, I find myself having very little sympathy.

Life is a series of "checks & balances." Heaven + Hell. Do's + Don'ts. Good + Bad. Even the most primitive societies have "checks & balances." Lines are drawn by someone or something that, if crossed, result in a consequence.

We are tempted to cross the street when no one is around even though the pedestrian light says wait. We are tempted to ignore feeding a fifteen-minute parking meter hoping to return before the meter-maid shows up.

We expose ourselves to serious consequences when running a yellow light. Whether temporal or spiritual, every action has an opposite. By ignoring these laws, we run the risk of being caught and facing the consequences.

Lavina claims "to be a believing and orthodox Mormon" which is like suggesting she is for free enterprise but supports socialism. In fact, her belief and orthodoxy are in the culture and society of Mormonism, not the Restoration. She accepts the theory of the law but chooses the law(s) she will accept.

Her issue is not with the "Brethren." Her issue is with the Restoration and the means by which the Lord advances his gospel on earth. She cannot accept the Restoration of the gospel and ignore the "Lord's chosen" anymore than she can accept the laws of the road and ignore those who enforce it.

She references 200 cases of ecclesiastical abuse to support her cause when, in fact, those are pretty small numbers considering the size of the church. Her statement is analogous to an airline losing a piece of luggage. You always hear about the one bag being lost but never hear about the thousands that arrive.

Nowhere have I read that church leaders must be perfect in all things, including counseling, understanding, solutions, etc. The apostles of old were no different. They were prone to mistakes as they developed. Even Peter, having reached his "status" with the Lord, still ignored the Lord's statement when told he would "deny the Christ." And then, of course, there was Judas.

Her justification for referencing the Apostle Paul in Timothy and to the Saints in Corinth is weak because

she ignores the same counsel Paul gave to those Saints in his "wards." As they received counsel and had the choice, she received counsel and had the choice.

No, I think she and the others give themselves too much credit. They are not the martyrs they would like us to believe. If so, they will soon be forgotten as the majority of members will find comfort with the counsel received from those chosen to lead us, who do their best to understand the concerns we have while acknowledging their own imperfections.

She can't reject the statement "we are a crippled and a crippling body of Christ, not functioning very well some of the time bound in an insane way on functioning worse." Why! It is descriptive of the person who wants us to reject it.

The impact of her excommunication on others will have very little import. She has, in fact, cut the ties with the very church she claims to believe in and, while doing so, has lost her effectiveness and other more important possibilities.

Life isn't fair.

John H. Emmett  
Portland, Oregon

### *Sounding Off*

Having recently divorced myself from the church, I would like to take an opportunity to do something I have never done before. I want to sound off publicly and then I promise to be silent forever more.

To those in the church (some are now out) who call themselves intellectuals, and whom we tentatively acknowledge to be such, I support your

being because you do tend to keep things in healthy turmoil most of the time. Since it is natural that no person in authority (anointed or otherwise) likes having to explain his actions, I must surmise that neither would you if the tables were turned. However, when you begin to take yourselves too seriously and feel that the well-being of everyone depends on your insights, then you not only tend to become slightly boorish, but you must expect that your toes might eventually get stepped on. Consider just how foolish your opposites in power are appearing about now, and learn something regarding humility. Also, all too often your actions (writings) DO give the appearance of being sour grapes. *But don't stop . . .*

To my Sisters in their quest, I say "Go for it." But when you finally get the proverbial KEY TO THE MEN'S JOHN don't be too disappointed to discover that the toilets are no different than the ones you already use. In other words, when you do get the priesthood you are going to find that it is about as powerless in your hands as it is in the hands of the men who now enjoy its privileges (except as a tool to beat you over the heads). Until we start LIVING what Christ taught, the Mormon priesthood is no more spiritually powerful than the gifts given to Southern Baptists, Methodists, Buddhists, Shamans, Wiccans, or anyone else who can, and does, heal, see clearly, give blessings, etc., and make it work. It is unfortunate that you have fallen for this myth of Priesthood as being so extraordinary that for it you feel you need to beg, grovel, fight, dream, or look forward to in some mystical anticipation. In fact you already have this very power. Get off your buns, sisters, and begin to use

it in your lives, and quit falling for this piggist nonsense, hook, line, and sinker. Can't you see that it is both just a carrot and a stick that keep you on the straight and narrow, and is also used to discipline you when the brethren think it necessary.

To my gay brothers and sisters I put my arms around you and give you all my love. Of course we all want a place in which we feel loved, in which we feel wanted and needed and accepted, but first we have to learn the art of loving, and wanting, needing, and accepting ourselves, and then we will discover that the place we seek has always been there, waiting only for us to open the door and enter in. We are the door, and we are the chamber. We are the church, and we are the Temple of God. Do we need more? Once you *KNOW* this, you will also *KNOW* how unimportant it is that the church grudgingly offers you a seat in the back of the bus. Our spiritual journey is with God, not with the brethren in Salt Lake, not with the Orson Scott Cards of the world. These folk will always find an excuse, usually in the scriptures, to make them feel good, and as justification for their unchristlike actions. Try loving the Lord your God with all your heart and discover the truth that he loves you just as much as YOU LOVE YOU.

To my brethren in the Church Office Building, let me quote something:

Every church organization must vigilantly stand guard over the purity of its ranks. For where degenerates, slipshod priesthood, careerists, self-seekers, those without morals, and others, remain in the church, the intellectual trash, the perverted gays, and the demented feminists have a fertile

ground for their work, find friends, and organize groups of like minded individuals for their counterproductive, Satan inspired, work.

Does that not sound familiar? Did we not hear something almost like this recently from the lips of a church prophet? Please forgive me for having substituted a few buzz words into this fine piece of writing to make my point. Now read the original:

Every party organization must vigilantly stand guard over the purity of its ranks, for where degenerates, slipshod operators, careerists, self-seekers, those without morals, and others remain in the Party, the counter-revolutionary-espionage-trotskyite-sinovievite has the ground for his work, finds his friends, organizes cadres for his counterrevolutionary, terrorist work.

This from an article in *Pravda*, 19 August 1936, entitled "Razveiar' vprakh vrogov sotsializma," written by Lavrentii Beria, one of Russia's bloodiest upholders of organizational purity, an organization against which our church and, more importantly, a recently-deceased prophet so long made a career of ranting and raving and filling our hearts with fear. Yet both Beria and our present crop of PROPHETS seem to be preaching from the same pulpit, and I must wonder, is a physical prison any more acceptable than a spiritual prison? Is a velvet covered gauntlet kinder and more gentle than a naked gauntlet, ultimately? Should we be willing to accept one more quickly or passively than the other? If we grant unlimited power, and are, in addition, fools enough to finance that power, should we be surprised if it is eventually used

against us? The brethren know they have much to gain and little to lose, considering the way the game is now played. Look at their lack of concern regarding an accounting of the finances of the church, and see the handwriting on the wall.

If all of these things emanating from the religious halls of power were not potentially so dangerous, they might seem simply ludicrous, but they are dangerous to everyone concerned. My response, after recovering from the most recent church-induced culture shock, was to have my name removed from the church rolls, and

what a wonderful feeling of freedom I experienced for the first time in my life. It is now, as Annalee Skarin says, between me and my God to explore the dynamics of spiritual growth and love. I decided if I want to belong to a social club I can do so, but I don't have to play a head game and call it the True Church. I can call it what it is, a nice organization that is getting not so nice, and then, with or without it, function accordingly.

Richard S. Christiansen  
Glorieta, New Mexico

*WILLIAM G. AND  
WINIFRED F. REESE  
MEMORIAL AWARD*

Entries are being accepted for the annual William G. and Winifred F. Reese Memorial Award. The \$500 recognition of achievement will be given to the person completing or publishing the best doctoral dissertation or master's thesis in the field of Mormon history. Manuscripts should be submitted by February 1, 1995, to the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History, 127 KMB, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602, USA. These will not be returned to the authors.

This year's award, based upon material completed or published in 1994, will be given at the Mormon History Association annual meeting to be held in Kingston, Ontario, Canada, in June 1995.